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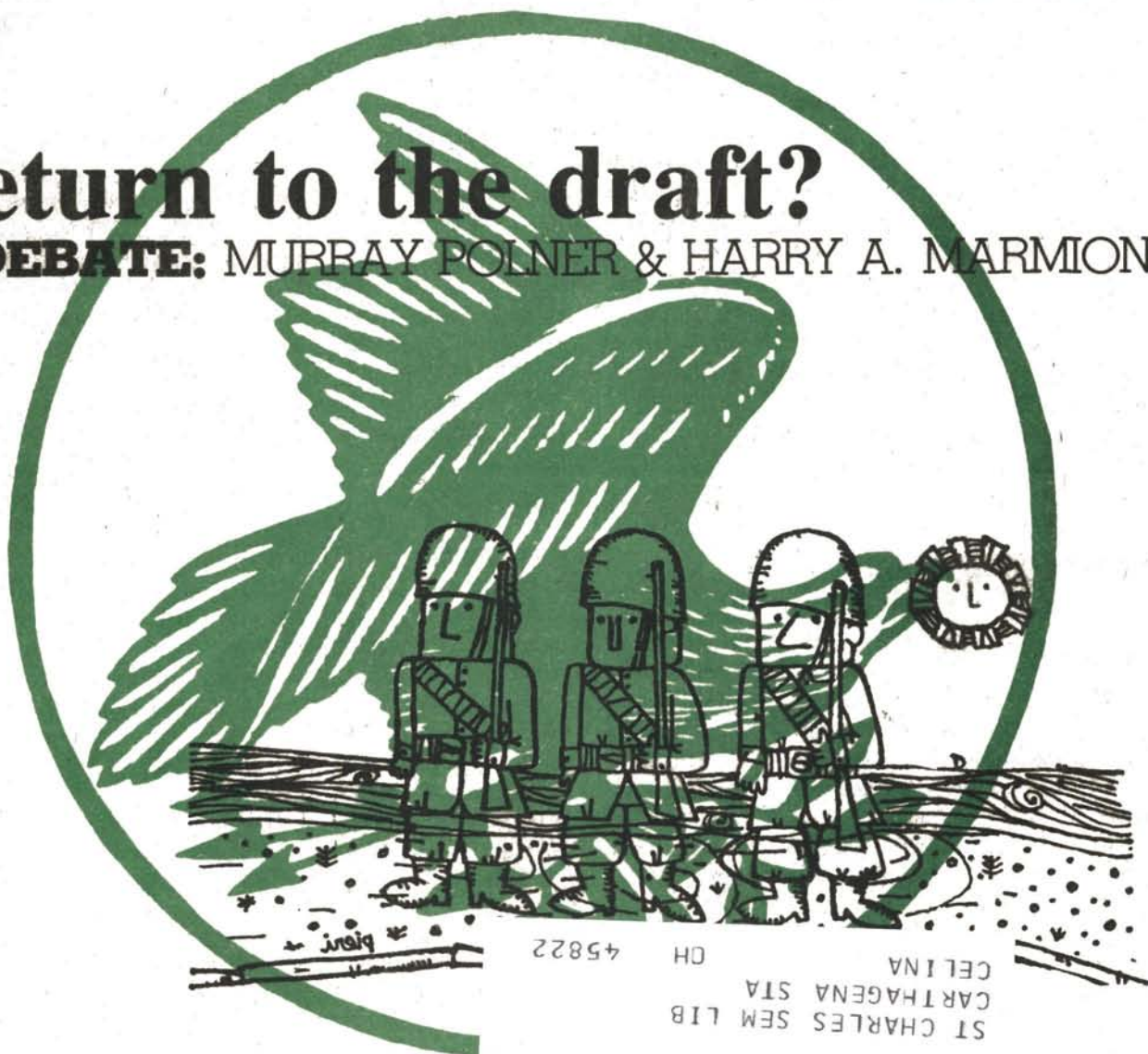
The Editors
CURBING PACS

ONE DOLLAR

OCTOBER 12, 1979

Return to the draft?

A DEBATE: MURRAY POLNER & HARRY A. MARMION



**THOMAS POWERS ON TOM WOLFE IN ORBIT • KATHARINE
BYRNE, 'IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME' • DESMOND O'GRADY
ON TERRORISM IN FICTION • STAGE, SCREEN, TV, BOOKS**

Correspondence

American blind eye

Heidelberg, West Germany
To the Editors: As a West German I read "McCarthyism West German-style" [Aug. 3] with bated breath. The author—alas!—has hit the nail on the head. He describes the really grotesque situation of our country. And the thought of a possible government under Franz Joseph Strauss is increasing the uneasiness.

Please permit an addition: That ex-Nazis are in high places was partly the doing of the Americans as occupying power. In order to prevent the West Germans from gliding off to the East Communist system or at least to a socialist regime, they turned a blind eye during the building of the West German democracy, to the rehabilitation of such ex-Nazis as Globke, Kiesinger, Filbinger, Schleyer and many others.

(REV.) ALFONS BEIL

Restating the cliché

Notre Dame, Ind.
To the Editors: I have been spending some time in the U.S. for reasons of research and I read with much interest what is being written on West Germany, where I come from. The article by Milton Mankoff, "McCarthyism West German-style" [Aug. 3] obviously tries to overcome some clichés often applied to West Germany. He correctly quotes some facts and tries to make them understandable, but in doing so, he overstates his point.

The purpose of the "Radikalenerlass"—promulgation concerning radicals—on which Mr. Mankoff wrote is to control primarily activities of those people who try to overturn the democratic system. Mr. Mankoff rightly mentions the problem of identifying politically subversive persons and he is correct in citing some shameful misuses. But in elaborating on them he distorts what is going on in West Germany. He mentions the problems brought about by the en-

forcement of new laws to fight terrorism, but he does not mention how many people have been threatened with death, injured by attempted assassination, or murdered by terrorists. Mr. Mankoff ridicules West Germany because of its seeming paranoia about spies, but no mention is made of the fact that Chancellor Willy Brandt retired because one of his closest advisors was a spy from the German Democratic Republic. Mr. Mankoff finds an "alarming insensitivity to Nazis," but he does not mention the public discussion following the broadcast of the holocaust-film nor the recent debates in parliament and its decision not to end Nazi-trials.

Mr. Mankoff rejects the cliché "seeing Nazism reviving in every German soul." But in interpreting the current situation in West Germany as a "reaching back into the authoritarian past" he reinstates the cliché himself in a more subtle and therefore a more deplorable way.

JOSEF MEYER ZU SCHLOCHTERN

The Pope's visit

Cambridge, Mass.
To the Editors: As everyone in Boston raptly awaits the coming visit of Pope John Paul II, it was useful to read Paul Thibaud's thoughtful reflections on spiritual authority in a secularized world [Sept. 14]. As one who once admired the contribution of *Esprit*, I am glad its editorship is now in his hands. I wonder however if some of the same limitations that once dogged that journal when it was more explicitly "personalist" still impair his otherwise lucid remarks. That winsome philosophy, as Mounier developed it, had a wonderful power to affirm the human against all its social and ideological assailants. Not surprisingly, it was never quite as good at understanding its own less explicit ideological coloration. That may be true of Thibaud's article also. Understandably he wants the church to play from strength and to preserve the integrity of those private and personal realms—family, local community, suffering and death—and not become too explicitly involved in the larger, more complex issues of politics where the

temptation to accept easy answers and slogans may bring discredit.

All this is fine as far as it goes. However the trouble is that in this modern secularized society in which he wants that spiritual authority to be exercised, the very "hyperpoliticization" he opposes has already occurred. One does not have to wish the Pope had emulated Camilo Torres in Latin America to recognize, for example, that the Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua were forced to take arms not in response to some shrill ideology but because the invasion of their farms and villages by colossal agricultural combines backed up by their own nation's military forces was driving them from the land, splitting up their families and reducing them to penury. What classical personalism sometimes fails to grasp is that the mini-realm of the personal is frightfully vulnerable and can often only be defended by explicitly political means.

Personalism is an especially tricky philosophy to deal with in America where the prevailing ideology (which is no less an ideology because it is prevailing and therefore not recognized as such) views religion as something that belongs in the private and personal arena. This tends to make any religiously based criticism of corporate power seem like meddling in the wrong realm. This tradition has its theological sources in certain forms of Protestant pietism and in extreme versions of the Lutheran two-realms theory. However, neither Calvinism nor Catholicism, two other traditions which are not absent from America (and certainly not from Boston!), have historically always insisted that religious values must also
(Continued on page 575)

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Contents

Volume CVI, Number 18

Correspondence	546
Editorials	547
A-bomb survivors: <i>Stephen Saloff</i>	548
Parliament U.S.-style: <i>Brian Wicker</i>	549
Wolfe in orbit: <i>Thomas Powers</i>	551
Opening Pandora's box: <i>Murray Polner</i>	553
It just isn't working: <i>Harry A. Marmion</i>	555
'It happens all the time': <i>Katharine Byrne</i>	557
Stage: <i>Gerald Weales</i>	559
Screen: <i>Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.</i>	560
Television: <i>Philip Terzian</i>	561
Terrorism in fiction: <i>Desmond O'Grady</i>	562

Books

Hollywood Hagiography: <i>Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.</i>	564
Ashes/7 Years from Somewhere: <i>W. S. Di Piero</i>	567
Why Catholic: <i>Dennis O'Brien</i>	568
I've Done So Well—Why Do I Feel So Bad?: <i>Carlo A. Weber</i>	570
Rise Gonna Rise: <i>Ed McConville</i>	572
A Life of Christ/Man of Nazareth: <i>Paul Wilkes</i>	574
Undesirable Alien: <i>Ronald Christ</i>	574

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CURBING POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

THE POST-WATERGATE reforms in federal election laws are producing one result few counted on: a phenomenal growth in political action committees, especially those financed by corporations and trade associations. Five years ago, when the electoral reform issue first came up, PAC's contributed \$12.5 million to congressional candidates. Two years later that amount had risen to \$22.6 million. Last year political action committees handed out \$35 million. The biggest growth is in corporate PAC's: in four years time their number has escalated from 89 to 821. The percentage of money raised by congressional candidates from PAC's has doubled since 1972 to about 25 percent in the 1978 elections.

This mushrooming of special interest money for congressional campaigning is a matter of real concern, and the growth of corporate PAC's especially so. Labor union, professional organization and single-interest PAC's at least represent individual citizens who join together to promote a common political interest. Corporate PAC's seek specifically economic goals on a strictly quid-pro-quo basis, and their ten-fold growth since 1975 is a good indication that they are succeeding.

Are PAC's in general effective? As an example, Common Cause cites last year's bill designed to hold down hospital costs, a crucial issue in the drive for national health insurance, and one which could save hospital patients \$27 billion over the next five years. Chief opponent of the measure, of course, was the American Medical Association. Over a three year period the AMA's political action committee contributed more than \$100,000 to the members of the committee handling the bill. Subsequently the measure was defeated in that committee by one vote.

A recent Harvard study suggests that the post-Watergate electoral reform laws have inherent weaknesses that have helped to produce the proliferating PAC's. Its authors suggest a heavy dose of deregulation and the tripling of the current \$1000 limit on individual contributions to one campaign, as compared with the \$5000 a political action committee is allowed to give. In this connection a compromise bill which applies only to House campaigns offers some promise—indeed, it offers what is probably the last opportunity the 96th Congress will have to restrict special interest giving. Already endorsed by 130 House members, the bill would do the following: cut in half the amount political action committees could contribute to a candidate in both the primary and general elections; put a \$50,000 limit on the amount a candidate could receive from the committees (some candidates have received more than twice that sum); and prohibit the committees, consultants and direct-mail experts from extending more than \$1000 credit to candidates for more than 30 days—a very important provision. This bill is the culmination of a five-year effort to revise the electoral system. In the past, the special interests concentrated on contributions to presidential candidates, but in 1976 presidential elections were

12 October 1979: 547

placed under public financing. Repeated efforts since that time to extend public financing to House and Senate races have failed with resistance traditionally coming from members elected from safe districts, Southern and urban Northern Democrats who feared that the availability of public money would encourage strong opposition at election time—which may well be true, and a good thing too.

The compromise bill now before Congress has much to commend it, even with the addition of amendments designed to sweeten the measure for opponents. It would markedly cut the flow of PAC funds and reduce the present tendency toward Washington-based centralization of PAC activity; most important, it would work against the growing tendency of congressmen to be more responsive to oil money or various special interests than to their constituents or to their national party leadership. We are still convinced, we should add, of the need for public financing of congressional campaigns, modeled on that already followed in presidential races; when a senator seeking reelection spends almost \$7,000,000 or \$13 a vote to buy a second term, as happened in 1978, something is radically wrong. But for now that reform seems impossible to achieve, and the present House legislation represents a positive and much needed step to curb PAC power, at least to some extent. As things stand now, altogether too many congressional decisions seem to be bought and sold by political action committees, and their growth, phenomenal as it has been, has just begun unless action is taken.

THE SEBERG CASE

The FBI tried to drive Martin Luther King, Jr. to suicide; it failed. In the case of Jean Seberg, however, it may have succeeded.

Newspaper readers know the story. In an effort to discredit the actress because she supported the black nationalist cause, in 1970 it spread information that was false and known to be false, to the effect that she was pregnant not by her husband but by a Black Panther leader. Seeing the report in a gossip column, Miss Seberg went into labor prematurely and the baby died soon after birth—to be buried, reportedly, in a glass coffin to demonstrate that it was not black. Every year thereafter, said Romain Gary, her second husband, the actress attempted suicide on the anniversary of the baby's death, failing in each attempt. A few weeks ago she finally succeeded in the effort.

In one way this is an insignificant story. Compared to the slaughter in Vietnam, to the plight of the boat people, the slow starvation of the Cambodian people, one death does not add up to very much. But in another way it is in such "little" things that our society will and should be judged. A new charter for the FBI that would prevent such abuses is currently being considered in Congress. "Remember Jean Seberg" might be a good message for wavering Congressmen who think the proposed charter is somehow too hard on that organization.

Nuclear politics

A-BOMB SURVIVORS

VICTIMS STILL IN NEED OF CARE

THOUGH LARGELY unknown to their fellow citizens, 1,000 or more survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb catastrophes lead lives of physical, emotional, and financial hardship here in the United States. These victims, principally U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry studying or working in Japan when World War II broke out and postwar brides of U.S. servicemen, have long been engaged in a tenacious struggle to obtain adequate medical care. This struggle is now at a new turning point with medical relief legislation before Congress.

Until recently, the poorly understood maladies of these A-bomb survivors were considered idiosyncratic even in advanced non-military medical circles of North America. But the Japanese term "Hibakusha," literally "A-bomb received person," is now entering general use to designate all victims of nuclear radiation and to recognize a clear syndrome of maladies arising from nuclear radiation. The serious nuclear reactor accident at the Three Mile Island power station and the medical claims of U.S. servicemen and civilians exposed to radiation at the Defense Department's nuclear weapons testing sites have led many others to realize that they are also Hibakusha. The need for sophisticated knowledge about radiation dangers and for treatment of radiation-related illness is now more than ever urgent.

The Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims residing in the U.S. are a special group among the nearly 370,000 survivors who have been medically registered as A-bomb sufferers by the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Japan. Since they were strong enough to break their roots and emigrate, their number automatically excludes the grossly injured and sufferers of acute radiation diseases. Their daily lives are for the most part manageable, but as the Hibakusha reach their middle and later years, they report greater susceptibility to disease, and a slower recovery rate from illness.

They vividly recall the monstrous injuries, deaths and lingering radiation poisoning of the A-bomb shocks. They find their own terrible pains, for the most part, undiagnosed by the medical profession, so it is not surprising that the anxiety-ridden Hibakusha attribute their complaints to the holocaust. Any symptom, to the Hibakusha, is a possible sign of premature death, and their worries are heightened by apprehension that their children and grandchildren may suffer serious health deficiencies and physical deformities.

And yet, if the Hibakusha openly reveal their tragic histories and distressing psychic trauma, insurance companies may cancel or raise the cost of their health coverage, or amend policies to exclude infirmities resulting from the atomic bombings. An exclusion clause in many Blue Cross health insurance

contracts disallows claims resulting from "war injury," which would include the many radiation and other A-bomb afflictions in the Hibakusha of 1945. (In fact, Blue Cross specifically absolves itself of claims resulting from "atomic explosion or other release of nuclear energy" occurring after the effective date of the insurance agreement. This would make impossible insurance against future radiation release from nuclear misfortunes such as Three Mile Island.) The extent to which anemia or more serious blood diseases, such as leukemia, which debilitate the Hibakusha, are insurable with Blue Cross is unclear. The Hibakusha may also find it difficult to obtain, through Blue Cross, Medicare and medical insurance policies, the preventive medicine they require.

The United Nations General Assembly resolved on November 24, 1961 that the use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law and a crime against humanity. The U.S. government, which voted against this resolution and has opposed subsequent attempts to withdraw legitimacy from nuclear war, denies any ethical or legal liability for the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic disasters, and the thermonuclear fallout calamity at the Bikini Atoll in March 1954.

Despite this *a priori* legal-political barrier, an Atomic Bomb Survivors Bill (HR 1129) was introduced in the House of Representatives in January 1979 by Congressman Edward Roybal (D., Los Angeles). This bill would extend limited medical coverage to U.S. citizens and permanent residents who were injured by the atomic bombings. Predecessor Hibakusha aid legislation, which Roybal has been patiently pushing since 1972, died in the House Judiciary Committee in 1978, but bill 1129 stands a better chance of passage. Rep. Roybal has informed me that 30-40 percent of the Judiciary Committee now favors his measure.

The Roybal bill has been backed by the entire medical community, first by the Los Angeles County and California Medical Association, whose members have treated the local Hibakusha populations, and finally by the American Medical Association in 1978. However, the bill has thus far been blocked by Congressmen close to the Defense Department, which clearly fears that if 1129 is enacted, victims of past (or future) "conventional" wars (such as Indochina and Korea) will then also seek grounds to demand financial compensation. Medical relief advocates have countered that the damage and after-effects of the A-bombings create a special complex of "unprecedented" difficulties in maintaining and rebuilding the lives of the Hibakusha, which distinguish them from the rehabilitation problems faced by victims of non-atomic war.

The obligation which many now feel to aid the Hibakusha suggests a more general obligation of the United States to accept both the 1961 United Nations resolution outlawing nuclear war, and belated responsibility for the human and environmental destruction caused by the blast, burn and radioactivity of nuclear weapons.

STEPHEN SALOFF

(Stephen Saloff based this article on interviews carried out with the principals in the campaign for government-sponsored medical care for nuclear explosion survivors.)

Report from Britain

PARLIAMENT U.S.-STYLE COMMITTEES COME TO WESTMINSTER

THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT is currently considering a proposal which is arguably the most important reform in Parliamentary procedure this century. At least, that is how it was presented by the "Leader of the House" (i.e., the government's floor-manager) when he announced the new proposals. Since it has been said that the idea is to develop committees on the analogy of those which already exist in the U.S. Congress, it is perhaps worth outlining the government's suggestions for American readers.

It should be said at the outset that the suggestions are not just those of the new Conservative government. They result from an all-party Parliamentary investigation into the best way of reasserting the power of the elected members of Parliament over the executive and the civil service. The "back-bench" M.P., it is generally agreed, has become less and less important in the last thirty years, except as "lobby-fodder." ("Back-benchers" are those M.P.s who are not, formally, members of the government. One has to remember that a fair proportion of M.P.s—perhaps about a hundred altogether at any one time, out of the six-hundred-plus total—are in the government. Many of them are only in junior jobs: nevertheless, they are bound by the doctrine of collective government responsibility.)

The job of the back-bencher, in recent years, has been whittled away by various factors, until his role has become largely that of voting for whatever his party in Parliament tells him to vote for. Even his role as watchdog and advocate for his own constituents, in their disputes with the state, has been somewhat diminished by the introduction of the "ombudsman"—despite the fact that the latter can only work on cases brought by M.P.s themselves. Parliament, it is widely felt, has become nothing more than a talking shop and a rubber-stamp. However much M.P.s can say, in the end they just have to file into the "yes" or "no" lobbies according to the wishes of the whips. Of course, this is not a new conception of Parliament. W. S. Gilbert expressed it, immortally, nearly a century ago:

When in that house M.P.s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
They've got to leave their brains outside
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to.
But then the prospect of a lot
Of dull MPs in close proximity
All thinking for themselves is what
No man can face with equanimity . . .

Nevertheless it seems to be generally agreed by those with long experience in Parliament that things nowadays are a lot worse than they were in "Queen Victoria's golden days" when

Every boy and every gal
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative.

The idea, then, is to form "select committees" of M.P.s (each one consisting of perhaps nine M.P.s) to watch over, or "shadow" the workings of each of the main government departments. These committees will be able to ask for papers, and to summon civil servants to appear before them to explain how and why things are being done as they are. They will then report their findings to Parliament as a whole, so that these can be discussed and, if necessary, action can be taken.

The rationale of this proposal seems clear enough. The amount of legislation, and the complexity of government machinery, is nowadays such that its details cannot possibly be understood, let alone profitably criticized by every M.P. on the floor of the House of Commons. There is neither the time nor the expertise to do this job properly, except through the development of specialist groups. That is essentially what the committees will be, groups of specialists in the various areas of government activity, who can give the time, and have the background, to master the complexities and to report necessary criticisms to their fellow members. They will be able to "grill" those responsible for policy or administration, and to make them justify their actions publicly. In this way, the elected representatives of the people will regain some of their power over the executive, and democracy will be at least partly restored.

The idea seems obvious. And the need for some reassertion of democratic power is generally accepted. Why then the fuss? How is it possible for some members, including some of those most jealous of the privileges of Parliament (like Michael Foot) to be against them?

Well, the reasons are complicated and various. There are some fairly simple technical objections to the proposals as they stand. The method of appointing the members of the various committees is open to the criticism that nobody who is going to be really "difficult" is likely to be chosen. (The committees themselves will be appointed by a selection committee which will itself be the product of bargaining and agreement between the main party machines. Hence, it is said, ultimately the party machines will remain in control.) Again, the size of the committees is said by some to be far too small for the members of it to be able to cope with the work of the larger government departments. Another bone of contention arises from the refusal of the government, in putting forward its ideas, to countenance giving the committees subpoena powers over ministers. The committees will not be able to compel government ministers to give evidence before them—on the grounds that there is a collective responsibility on the part of the government as a whole, under the headship of the Prime Minister, and this would be weakened if the committees were able, even against the wishes of the Prime Minister, to demand of a particular minister that he appear before them. (This problem has already arisen in the recent past, under Harold Wilson, in connection with the one existing committee which

looks into government expenditure: doubtless it is this experience which has led to the precise form of the present proposals.)

However, all these are technicalities: the real objections lie deeper. One interesting comment, which I heard from a senior civil servant, was that oddly enough the committees might become too "friendly," and not critical enough, towards the department they are supposed to criticize. Any senior civil servant, it is said, would naturally try to cultivate good relations with the committee members. He would hope to see them as friends, ready and willing to defend his own empire, rather than as opponents whose job was to raise awkward questions. To have a powerful Parliamentary committee on one's side—say in a battle for resources—would be an enormous fillip to any department of state. And given the nature of British society, and the widespread social nexus of education, class and outlook that is shared between senior civil servants and a large number of M.P.s, this must be counted as a real danger. How will the M.P.s be able to guard themselves against this danger—especially if it is true that the really "awkward" or "bolshie" M.P.s—are likely to be left out of the committee structures by the very process of appointment that is suggested? (The capacity of British state institutions to absorb and stifle criticism by inserting a sort of social cotton wool into the system, is well known.)

Another danger is that the development of the committees will create two classes of M.P.s: those who are "in the know" and those who are not. (If the committee members were actually paid for the extra work they will have to do, this would make things worse.) This would certainly be damaging if it happened. But presumably, it could be countered by a fairly rapid turn-over of membership on a rotation basis. But would this be compatible with that of a mastery of administrative detail which is part of the rationale of the whole exercise?

Perhaps the most far-reaching criticism of the proposals, however, is that which quite simply sees it as removing some of the traditional freedom and sovereignty of the House of Commons. Is it not the House of Commons itself, in open debate, which is the safeguard of liberty over against the state? To siphon off much of this function into little, semi-secret groups upstairs is a dangerous procedure. What guarantee is there that the results of such investigations, held necessarily out of the limelight, will ever be fully debated by the House as a whole? There is certainly some substance in this criticism when one sees how little time the government is proposing to give to the debating of the reports of the various committees, on the floor of the House itself. And given the present state of Parliamentary procedure as a whole, it is hardly possible to envisage the investigations of the committees ever becoming interesting enough to engage the enthusiasm of the media. They will of their very nature tend to be tedious matters of detail: hardly of sufficient general importance to warrant more than a token public presence. The semi-secrecy of the proceedings may not be intentional, but will surely be inevitable in practice.

However, the ultimate reason and justification for the re-

forms I have been discussing is the revival of democratic Parliamentary politics itself. What is in the minds of those drafting the proposals is the recognition that, as things are now, Parliamentary democracy is largely a sham. No amount of belief in the sheer power of oratory (a belief shared by such otherwise opposed figures as Enoch Powell on the Right and Michael Foot on the Left) will alter the fact that, as it now stands, Parliament is not widely respected or regarded in the country, as the bastion of liberty or the guarantee of good government. But it is a moot question how far tinkering with the workings of Parliament can make people feel differently

about it. On the other hand, the fate of the Liberal party in recent elections seems to suggest that people are not much more interested in the fundamental reforms, such as the introduction of proportional representation into the electoral system itself, which might be expected to do the job better. It will take more than these reforms of Parliamentary procedure to convince the people that M.P.s are much more than (in W. S. Gilbert's words) a lot of dull chaps in close proximity, or that the prospect of each one thinking for himself is anything other than a challenge to our national equanimity.

BRIAN WICKER

Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

WOLFE IN ORBIT

OUR MERCURIAL INTERESTS

LET ME BEGIN with a few bald assertions: Tom Wolfe is a serious man, the funniest American writer since Mark Twain, and the author of the only book about the space program which grasps just how little technical virtuosity had to do with it. It's well-known that Wolfe's eye is wicked, and his artistry is recognized by everyone who knows that good stories are told, not found; but the rigor of Wolfe's pride is generally misunderstood. He will not go easy on the reader. He will dazzle and entertain; no writer provides better value for the money, but Wolfe will not explain. The result is that reviewers who ought to know better conclude Wolfe doesn't really know what he's about. He is described, and in the end dismissed, as a raw exploiter of his material, a kind of literary robber baron, who casts the husk aside without ever bothering to say, because he is too superficial to care, what it means.

As a writer Wolfe does not have a likable persona, and *The Right Stuff* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$12.95) is not a likable book. There is not an ounce of kindness, sympathy, or generosity in it. Perception and humor, yes, but nothing softer. Wolfe might argue—he never would, but he might—that the first seven astronauts chosen for the Mercury program were so engulfed by teary and un-

critical emotional assent they have no need for a pat on the back from him. But the argument would be purely rhetorical. Wolfe doesn't seem to have written a generous word in his life. What he's like as a man I can't say; I suspect he's a decent fellow, and that his subjects have a terrible time trying to square the warmth of his interest as a man with the merciless results in print. The wives of the Mercury astronauts in particular, who doubtless cooked more than one dinner for Wolfe, must shrink inside when they read about themselves. He has been less than ferocious where they are concerned. He does not actually name the astronauts who went a bit wild with all the girls dazzled by the astronaut aura, nor does he quite reach full throttle with the vanity of the wives in their role as The Honorable Mrs. Captain Astronaut. But it's a withering portrait all the same; true, one suspects, but harsh.

This harshness, coupled with a certain aloof pugnacity toward all that is sacred to the right-thinking, socially earnest liberal intelligentsia—a class broad enough to include the present writer—has gradually elicited a degree of resentment among the writers about writers quite different from the enthusiasm which welcomed Wolfe's first book nearly fifteen years ago. Nobody denies that Wolfe is funny. Not even Queen Victoria could

have resisted his manic flights. The man is so funny he makes you weep. One long scatological passage in *The Right Stuff*, a description of Pete Conrad duckwalking to the men's room after a barium enema, rises to a comic intensity unequalled by Rabelais. At the conclusion of that passage Queen Victoria would have required smelling salts. Wolfe is unique, but having conceded that, reviewers turn cool, and suggest there's no weight to the fellow, *The Right Stuff* is a good read but of no consequence. Wolfe is incapable of rising to the occasion; if he'd been writing about Columbus instead, the book would have been filled with Italian dialect jokes.

This is a grudging reaction, but Wolfe has certainly invited it. He's gone out of his way to poke a stick in the eye of post-Vietnam-Watergate liberal orthodoxy. One piece about Navy pilots bombing North Vietnam, a few years ago, was a breathtaking exercise in perversity. You can be sure it wasn't justice to the pilots which Wolfe had in mind as he described their bravery and skill, but the shrill fury of all those people—by that time very numerous—who had finally got imaginative hold of the horror which was the pilot's gift to the people on the ground. The same might be said of Wolfe's article on "The Me Decade," which cast the 1970s as a time of histrionic self-absorption. Wolfe has a capacity for inventing, or resurrecting, phrases which stick. In the early 1960s he took a Southern colloquialism—"good ol' boys"—and gave it a national currency. "The Me Decade" is going to bedevil social historians for a long time to come. Christopher Lasch was only the

first victim in *The Culture of Narcissism*. The '70s witnessed at least two major dislocations of lasting significance—the constitutional collision embedded in Watergate, and the first squeeze in the aorta of oil—but Wolfe's prickly independence will not recognize the obvious. It seems to be a matter of pride. He is not always wrong when he goes his own way; his skepticism of the hallucinogenic enthusiasms of the '60s and of the "revolutionary chic" which briefly elevated the Black Panthers were models of sober accuracy. But Wolfe *will* go his own way, wrong or not. The question to be asked of *The Right Stuff* is whether there is anything more in it than a lot of funny passages and a phrase bound to stick.

This is a book which gave Wolfe a lot of trouble. It began with a piece for *Rolling Stone* five or six years ago, and not long after it was announced on Farrar Straus's fall list as a forthcoming book. But the announcement was not followed by the book, more than once. The book which won't get written is a perennial of the literary marketplace. Truman Capote's *Answered Prayers* is currently leading contender for the title of world's most long-delayed book, but Wolfe's legendary facility suggested *The Right Stuff* was blocked by something more fundamental than the fussiness of the stylist who can't let go. Now that the book is here it's easy to see what the problem was. Wolfe has scrapped everything about the moon program, the subject of his original *Rolling Stone* articles, and concentrated instead on the Mercury program, which was only the faltering first step of the journey into space. Wolfe's early stuff on the moon shots was wonderful, and the drama of the moon landing overshadows the first flights of Al Shepard and John Glenn, which naturally makes one wonder what drove Wolfe back to the beginning. The answer is artistic discipline; Wolfe had something more in mind than a mere history of what happened.

I've been trying to remember when the last moon landing took place, and why it was the last. It wouldn't be hard to look up, but I've been trying to *remember*. The first certainly sticks in my mind; I watched it on television in Holland, and

while the snowy image did not set my heart pounding it was perfectly obvious this was an event of the first magnitude. That is not a point which needs laboring. But the last trip escapes me entirely, despite the fact I wondered at the time, and still wonder now, if it was the last forever. The Vikings, after all, stopped sailing to America. A lot of people seem to think the moon program was a lot of tomfoolery, a boondoggle of overreaching, a terminal case of American boosterism gone wild, spendthrift, grandiose and hollow. I don't think any such thing, but at the same time I can't remember the last landing. It's a bit as if the Court of Spain grew bored with Columbus's parrots, strange fruits and copper-colored savages who died so easily; decided the New World was too far away, and turned its attention to the really important problem of rebellion in the Low Countries. The moon program died with hardly a whisper of regret, and Tom Wolfe thinks he knows why.

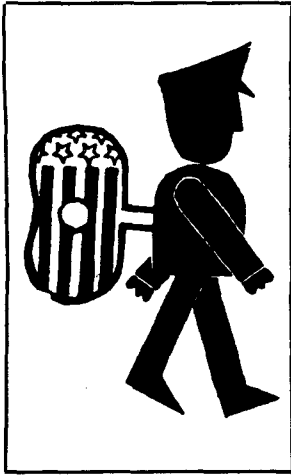
The answer, of course, is to be found in the nature of the right stuff. Wolfe's book is not a history; it is far too thin in dates, facts and source citations to serve any such purpose. It is a work of literature which must stand or fall as a coherent text, and its subject is not the Mercury program itself but the impulse behind it, the unreflecting competitiveness which drove the original astronauts to the quite extraordinary lengths Wolfe describes so vividly. At its heart the right stuff is what compels the admiration of equals. In the case of test pilots, from whose select company the astronauts were mainly drawn, the right stuff is bravery, single-mindedness, coolness and precision under pressure, an obsession with what comes down to moral character, a passion for finding out how far one can go.

From one point of view these men were purely crazy. What they did makes steeplechasers, mountain-climbers, motorcycle racers and teenage hot-doggers on the ski slopes look like timid hypochondriacs. Flying test planes was badly paid, turned the pilots' wives into jellied anxiety, and ended with horrifying regularity in jet-fuel infernos which left the pilots charred trunks of unrecog-

nizable meat. You might think the obliteration of a friend or two would sober a man up, but it doesn't seem to have had that effect. Some pilot failure was always squeezed out of the blindest set of facts, and the "accident" was blamed on oversight, or panic, or a second's indecision. The right stuff was not only an ability to pull it out, whatever the emergency, but a root conviction that failure is always personal. If a man is good enough, if he has the right stuff, he'll never fail. The reward is not a new plane. The planes are only toys. Who needs a plane which can fly at Mach 2? The reward is that admiration by one's equals which comes for having the right stuff, from pressing so far beyond the limits of other men they can have no response but awe. What Wolfe is talking about is the character of the species.

Blind reaching was behind the space program. All the fruits of scientific inquiry, so much resented by the pilots who had to conduct the experiments, were only window dressing. The space program did not fall into its present somnolence because the scientists had satisfied their curiosity; they were just getting started. But the impulse to reach faded when the race with the Russians ceased to have moment in the Cold War. The right stuff, after all, was not the exclusive obsession of test pilots. National leaders are possessed by it too; they can tolerate anything but the humiliation of finishing second. When the Russians abandoned the attempt to put a man on the moon the whole exercise suddenly seemed pointless, if not to those moved by sheer curiosity—and it is astonishing to me that anybody could be *bored* by what's out there—then to those men at the apex of governments whose appetite for dominance can alone make the astronauts look like passive underachievers. It was the chemistry of the Cold War which explained the vast undertaking begun by the Mercury program, the eye-to-eye staredown of Kennedy and Khrushchev which sent men into space, and might have ended in something much worse. Tom Wolfe had a great deal more in mind than telling funny stories, and he strikes me as having got it just about right.

THOMAS POWERS



AGAINST THE DRAFT

Opening Pandora's box

MURRAY POLNER

Editor's Note: On Sept. 12 the House voted, 259 to 155, against reviving Selective Service registration of all 18-year-old males for possible military service. Instead, the House asked the President to study and report to Congress on whether registration should be resumed, whether women should be included, and how to enable the armed forces to meet their manpower needs. In acting as it did, the House rejected the recommendation of its own Armed Services Committee which had proposed reviving Selective Service registration on Jan. 1, 1981. Despite the House action, attempts may be made to push a draft registration bill through the House and Senate later this year. Senator Sam Nunn (D., Ga.) is sponsoring such a measure, and the Senate may consider it in the next few weeks. In addition, advocates of a draft may attempt to include some form of registration in a pending bill on the House floor.

SENATOR JOHN STENNIS (D.-Miss.) never served a day in the military but it was very much on his mind at his Christmas recess press conference in Jackson in 1976. The Volunteer Army (AVF), he announced, was a "bothersome matter," too poor and too black, among other things. What was needed badly was a restoration of the draft. Back in Washington soon after, he amplified his remarks: A renewal of the draft "wouldn't pass right now . . . But more and more people are talking about it."

Those "people" Senator Stennis referred to are the very same men who resented deeply the end of the draft in 1973 because they believed it represented an ebbing of American power. Slowly at first but now reaching a peak of hysteria in a concerted, well-rehearsed campaign, they started a softening process once again to convince the American people that American forces are now outmanned, outgunned and in danger

MURRAY POLNER, *editor of Present Tense magazine*, wrote *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran and When Can I Come Home? about draft-resisters, deserters and exiles.*

of encirclement by the overwhelming might of the USSR. In the process they have falsely and deliberately denigrated the Volunteer Army, tried to frighten the public about the possibility of vast, new conventional land warfare ahead and manipulated assessments about spurious "manpower gaps" and costs overruns.

On the day after Jimmy Carter was sworn in, the effort to make a draft politically acceptable began. The President received a Defense Department proposal for a "standby draft" mandating that every young man between the ages of 18 and 26 register, but Vietnam was still fresh and the issue vanished from the front pages and American consciousness.

For the Pentagon and its congressional supporters, though, the issue has never died. If the draft is restored then Amerimerica will certainly return to its pre-Vietnam policy as global policeman and its willingness to intervene abroad. If not, if it retains the Volunteer Army, then there must be a recognition that power has its limits.

Beginning last autumn and continuing into this spring, the Pentagon has pursued a deliberate policy of defying its civilian director, Secretary of the Army Clifford L. Alexander, who opposes a draft for the active forces or the reserves as "unnecessary, unfair and counterproductive to the best interests of the army" (March 13, 1979). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones and Army Chief General Bernard Rogers have called for a two-step process, registration of youths to be followed—when the political risks are acceptable, no doubt—with conscription. This is the plan the generals support.

The first tactic of the pro-draft forces—as witness Senator Stennis—has been to damn the Volunteer Army as too poor, too black, too few. This criticism, which has been fed to the public through television, network documentaries, newspapers and magazines has, of course, been on the record. Privately, the professional military and its congressional backers on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees know otherwise, as official studies and reports have documented. Thus it was when the newest detailed study ordered by Stennis's ultra-hawkish Armed Services Committee and issued

12 October 1979: 553

December 31, 1978, under Defense Department auspices (including the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) concluded that "The AVF has provided the military service with a full strength active force of a quality equal to or superior to that achieved under the draft." In an appendix to the report, two Pentagon military personnel specialists added their own opinions, dismissing criticisms of the Volunteer Army as merely subjective [translation: political]: "A return to the draft is no panacea for the problems of today's military," they wrote. "In many cases a conscripted armed force would have even more serious problems than today's AVF."

Nor has the remarkable achievement of the Volunteer Army escaped the attention of Drew Middleton, military affairs specialist of the *New York Times*. The volunteers, he conceded last March, are seen by "many commanders and especially important, most of the noncommissioned officers . . . as the most effective peacetime force of this century . . . the majority of professional and noncommissioned officers would resist a resumption of the draft."

And writing in the *Wall Street Journal* in April, William H. Meckling, dean of the graduate school of management at the University of Rochester and former executive director of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, reported that the Volunteer Army is working and that "all four of the active duty armed forces have generally been able to maintain authorized strengths since conscription was abolished." To claim otherwise, noted Dean Meckling, "raises serious questions about congressional intent."

IF THE VOLUNTEERS are doing fine, what about the charge that our armed forces are too black? For one thing, neither the *Times* nor Senator Sam Nunn (Dem.-Ga.) and others who have brought up the question have explained why "too many blacks" is not good enough. George Wills, the conservative columnist who opposes a draft, put it best by asking "So what?" And Secretary Alexander, the first black male to hold a cabinet position, put the matter into even sharper focus: the ratio of black to white is "immaterial . . . I think you have to ask . . . why there is almost 40 percent unemployment among black teenagers before you ask why they enlist." The facts are that in 1977 the Volunteer Army had 319,000 blacks in the armed forces or 18 percent of the total number. The reason they opted for military service had nothing to do with the absence of a draft, but has mainly been because of financial rewards rather than coercion. As a result, blacks tend to reenlist, for example, in greater numbers than do whites. If the draft had been in operation, it would have had no effect

whatever on the reenlistment rate of blacks and whites.

Pro-draft forces offer two additional arguments: the allegedly undermanned reserves and the costs of the Volunteer Army. So far as the first is concerned, if there actually is a shortage of reserves—and the facts are far from clear—it can be blamed on the Pentagon's mismanagement and neglect. Until August 1976 the Army had no full-time recruiting force for the reserves; they also released thousands of men and women prematurely for such reasons as "defective attitude" and "apathy." In fiscal 1976, for example, 55 percent of the recruits were let go before their tour of duty was finished. The solution for the reserves is not a draft but a good recruiting program and much improved leadership and management. All the Army would have to do to fill its ranks, insists Robert L. Nelson, the Pentagon civilian concerned with the problem, is lower its admittance standards.

Well, if it isn't the condition of the Volunteer Army, its racial composition or the state of the reserves, is it the cost? Argued Senator Nunn: "The AVF may be a luxury which we may no longer be able to afford." Yet everyone who has studied the Pentagon's expenses has discovered that retirement benefits, salaries, officers' pay and service perquisites and not the volunteers are the real reason for high personnel costs. Ex-Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld countered the Nunn argument by pointing out that soaring costs were not due to first-term enlistments, which is all a draft would replace, and that pay raises for all first-term troops in 1977 amounted to only 18 percent of personnel costs.

In the end, the rationale for reinstituting the draft is grounded on other factors, as Drew Middleton revealed early in May as the debate heated up. The generals are calling for a draft, he wrote in the *Times*, because they believe that the "gap between the Army's global commitments and its resources is growing. This rather than the doubts about the effectiveness of the Volunteer Army, is the primary problem. These are not understood, officers say *bitterly* [my italics], by either the collegiate opposition or those in politics who adamantly oppose the resumption of the draft."

Exactly.

There are today 2.1 million men and women in uniform. Add to that number 800,000 in the Selected Reserve, 300,000 in the Individual Ready Reserve, up to 100,000 in the Delayed Entry Program, all buttressed by the largest, most destructive nuclear arsenal in history. Where is the prospect of a land war that justifies this sort of preliminary mobilization? The Soviet antagonist, while dangerous, is in truth an aging and clumsy bear, with severe internal and foreign problems, an inefficient economy, a brutal governing system, a Chinese nightmare to the east and unreliable client states to the west. Nor have the Soviets done well in the Third World where they cannot help with much more than armaments, the last thing in the world those underdeveloped nations need.

Not to be ignored is the fact that the return of registration or the draft will surely reopen the bitter divisions of the Vietnam war, a fact recognized even by the Defense Department study. Strong opposition is developing on campuses and elsewhere:



Commonweal: 554

organizations are being formed, resolutions passed, petitions signed, demonstrations held. Pro-draft forces are opening a Pandora's box again that had best remain closed. The latent anger of the 1960s could easily be aroused again among the children of the middle and (this time) working classes.

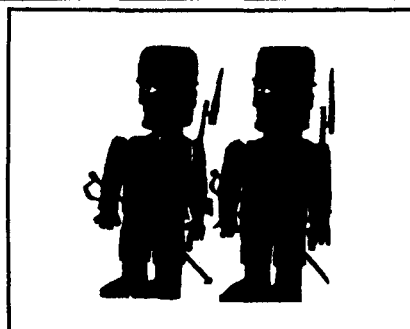
Yet the pro-draft forces push ahead, methodically, myopically, stubbornly. If there is a draft, there will be young men (and conceivably, this time, young women too)—18-year-old young men—who resist. Do Senators Stennis and Nunn and their cohorts really wish to force them into prison or Canadian exile? And in a time of peace? Have Senator Stennis and the other hawks who supported Vietnam escalation at every stage

recognized their debt to the soldiers of the 1960s and 1970s, the Vietnam veterans who have been and continue to be treated so shabbily by their country? Are we ready to establish yet another generation of victims?

Registration leads to a draft which will inevitably lead to military adventurism. I much prefer the comment ascribed to Rep. Marjorie S. Holt (R.-Md.), a member of the House Military Personnel Subcommittee which recently voted 5-4 to support registration for men turning 18 years of age after December 31, 1980—that is, *after the elections*—who said, "People are just going to say we're silly. We're trying to bring back a peacetime draft when we don't need it."

AGAINST THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

It just isn't working



HARRY A. MARMION

IN 1971 I WROTE a book entitled *The Case Against a Volunteer Army*. Not too many people paid much attention. The war, Nixon's position on the draft, and the cries of the middle class all but drowned out arguments against the all-volunteer force. Time, however, has enabled many to see the glaring weaknesses of the current system of obtaining the military manpower necessary to meet our legitimate national security needs.

No matter what claims are made to the contrary, the current system is not working. Despite the public insistence within the administration that the all-volunteer force (AVF) is in good shape, it is not. Consider the following:

Cost. In 1978 the General Accounting Office reported that the all-volunteer force had cost \$18 billion more than the draft would have if it had remained in effect.

Inelasticity. Should there be a legitimate national need to increase the AVF even by as much as 15 percent, there would be recruiting shortfalls and a draft would be necessary.

Shortfalls in meeting new goals. Each of the services has recently been unable to meet new enlistment goals. Each service has done what it could, but now it is clear that even the Air Force with its extensive training and school opportunities did not meet its December 1978 quotas. At times the services have been forced to offer a bonus to high school graduates who

would join the combat arms. Of course, the higher the unemployment rate the more apt the military is to be able to meet its goals, so that these shortfalls may be cyclical. Still, it would be ironic and unpalatable to rely on recession as a mainstay of military manpower policy.

First-term attrition. During the Vietnam war when the draft was in force about 20 percent of those inducted dropped out for a variety of reasons during the first years of service. In 1977, when the last figures were made public, more than 40 percent of recruits in the all-volunteer force dropped out before completing their first term. This sharp increase was attributed to literacy problems, medical problems, lack of discipline, financial hardship and inability to perform to the standards necessary in a sophisticated military.

Weakness of the Reserves and National Guard. This problem area of military preparedness is least understood by the public but one of the most important reasons why the Joint Chiefs of Staff are talking about a change in the way in which military manpower needs are met. During the Korean War some reserve units that were activated were decimated in combat—causing severe political problems at home. During the Vietnam conflict, reserves were not called; this, too, caused severe political problems at home. One of the cornerstones of the all-volunteer concept was to keep the active military establishment reduced as much as possible and increase the Reserve and Guard capacity to enable activation within 60 or 90 days after a conflict begins. But this strategy cannot be accomplished for the simple reason that without a draft the alternative of service in the reserves or National Guard no longer attracts the numbers needed. Those who volunteer for the active military and leave after their first term of service are likewise not being attracted to the various back-

HARRY A. MARMION, currently an educational consultant with the American Council on Education in Washington, has been an observer and participant in the military manpower procurement debate since the mid-Sixties and has written extensively on the subject in various publications.

up components. This then is the most critical problem for the Joint Chiefs. How can the military mobilize the reinforcement that might have to be rushed to Europe, for example, in the event of a military crisis? The army needs an active Reserve of 750,000. The individual ready reserve, the hardest hit of all reserve components, has declined from 1.6 million to 360,000 men in recent years.

Unreadiness for crisis. Last fall a nationwide exercise took place to test the capacity of the armed forces to react to limited military crisis. The results were a disaster. The Reserves are not ready; the National Guard, like the VFW and the American Legion, is a declining social club for some in the lower middle class. There are shortages of medical personnel, especially doctors and dentists in both the active and reserve forces, and never in the history of AVF have quotas in these areas been met. Further, the selective service machinery, virtually dismantled from 1972-1976, is in "deep freeze" with fewer than one hundred employees in Washington, no state headquarters and no local draft boards. It would take almost four months to induct the first draftee and another two months to conscript 100,000. Training time would be minimal. By the time we were ready to get troops to Europe probably only the islands of Iona, Jersey and Ireland would be available to save.

Declining recruitment pool. The demographer's message is clear and unambiguous: the number of 18-year-olds will decline by almost 25 percent from 1975 to 1980. The military has belatedly recognized the difficulty this signifies for recruiting and the potential conflict between the military, colleges and universities and industry. Higher education had long been preparing for the downturn in the traditional student population but the military felt that in a time of high national unemployment the all-volunteer force, with higher salaries, could meet military needs.

Only now does the combination of factors just discussed bring the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress, parts of the general public, and even the administration to the realization that the AVF is not the answer. So the Joint Chiefs are not so subtly pressing for the restoration of the standby draft system that existed in the first years of the all-volunteer force. It would require registration and possibly even testing of draft-age youth. It could also provide for a draft into the Reserves, after a short period of training. There are those who say such changes will increase the possibility of military adventures. The days of actions based on Gulf of Tonkin resolutions are long passed, however. No one seriously can believe that any administration would embark on such a course.

Several other important factors are at work in this debate. The military opposes an overhaul of its retirement system, now costing \$10 billion a year. The growing recruiting problems give the military a certain leverage with Congress, and the administration is protecting the system. The line of argumentation is clear: "If we can't recruit people now, you can imagine how tough it would be with a new, modified, less favorable retirement program." Many already in the military, especially first and second termers, would also leave if the retirement system changed.

Without doubt the volunteer system exacerbates all our national weaknesses. It is inevitably designed to make its primary appeal to the poor, minorities and the dispossessed, to whom the armed services act as an employer of last resort. This is true especially when cyclical civilian unemployment is high. Unemployment among young eligible blacks is twice the nation's average and reaches 40 percent in some urban centers. It is not surprising that 40 percent of the Army's male recruits in the fall of 1978 were black.

No problem is more worrisome than the shortage of middle class recruits. Illiteracy creates serious problems for recruiting. In Detroit one out of ten youths can pass the Navy literacy test. Three out of ten in Detroit pass the Army test; in New York City the figure is 3.5 out of ten and in Los Angeles four out of ten.

Despite the government's position on affirmative action, the military still lags in the recruitment of women. The military needs about 400,000 new recruits each year to fill its ranks. Approximately 10 percent or 40,000 of these currently are women. A significant increase in this category of recruiting would relieve some of the pressure.

EENTER, National Service. Some critics of AVF see National Service as an alternative to the current system. Many people believe that American youth have lots of rights but few duties. Conscription, it is said, would help restore the balance between rights and responsibilities and would generate a sense of public service among the young. My own feeling is that there are few real obligations of citizenship in our democratic system. In my judgment it is reasonable to oblige men and women to register and be considered for service, though not necessarily without more available options than in the old peacetime draft. Universal National Service is also being championed as a response to high unemployment, alienation and lack of motivation among the nation's youth. Even in a "full employment" economy there would be a significant unemployment rate among the young.

The administration has not said much about National Service, but President Carter has stated that if a draft were necessary in the future he would recommend it be combined with "a much more comprehensive public service opportunity, where people might go into jobs like the Peace Corps or VISTA, or teachers' aids, mental institutions, and so forth, along with military training." Carter also said such a program could include women.

Clearly, National Service and the draft will be seriously discussed this year, especially in Washington. The recently published final report of the Committee for the Study of National Service (published by the Potomac Institute and funded in part by the Ford Foundation) concludes that despite the arguments against the idea of universal National Service—including cost, increased bureaucracy and the inhibition of personal liberty due to compulsion—it favors universal service for American youth. It distinguishes a movement towards universal service from compulsory service by outlining a range of stages and options, with incentives but without

compulsion. This scheme includes service in the military as national service and would undoubtedly mean that the objectives of the American military would be modified to include domestic social service—an objective the military has steadfastly refused to consider seriously except in emergency situations.

What form would National Service take? Should the Congress be convinced that the all-volunteer force is not working, some form of military conscription would be enacted. Undoubtedly, the new draft law would be different from that of the past. It would probably contain a national service option. The best thinking in the past has come up with a three-option system. Simply stated: at age 18 everyone registers. Registrants have three options: (1) volunteer for the military, (2) volunteer for National Service, or (3) do nothing. If the military did not meet its needs, then the do nothings would face random selection into the military. Incentives would be skewed to favor participation in either the military or National Service. Current legislation proposed by Congressman Paul McCloskey has a fourth option which is really an amendment to voluntary service in the military. It would offer those in the pool the opportunity to spend a lesser time on active duty in the military—six months—and follow that by 5½ years in the Reserve.

One cannot be sure that a modified draft system, which includes national service, as well as a “do nothing” option will increase middle class participation in the military. A good deal will depend on how the salary, fringe benefits and length of service package is finally enacted. National Service partici-

pants might serve for longer periods of time, receive modest compensation, be assured vocational and educational opportunities while taking part in the program and a G.I. bill after service; the military option could have a shorter period of service, adequate salary and a G.I. bill. With such alternatives, the population mix in the military and National Service could change markedly. Certainly the military would pick the best by initiating stringent physical and mental requirements. Thus the pool of “do nothings” might need to be tapped—and again the mix of population altered.

What will happen in the near term? Not much. In my opinion, the stage is being set for a reinstatement of the Selective Service System. The President has recently nominated a Director of Selective Service. His job will be to reactivate the system. It will be a part of the Department of Defense initially. The apparatus for registration will be activated. The military and the administration will sneak up on the public and its opposition to compulsion. Congress will *not* vote at the present time for a change in the AVF but will allow an increase in preparation. How far Congress will go depends in large part on the near-term economic climate in the nation. If there is a recession then the all-volunteer force will fill its ranks; if not, then Congress may reinstitute a draft. If geopolitical circumstances warrant an increased active military establishment, Congress may be convinced to go further.

In any event, the all-volunteer force is on the ropes, like a fighter in the late rounds trying to go the distance. The stakes are too high to depend upon a *Rocky II* miracle. There must be a change, and there will be. Remember, I told you so.

SENDING A BOY TO MISSISSIPPI



‘It happens all the time’

KATHARINE BYRNE

EDITH HAS lived next-door to us for more than thirty years. (You can tell she’s no longer young, just by that name, Edith. Except in a television series, has anyone been called “Edith” in the past sixty years?) Since Edith and I are not casual kaffee klatchers, this morning when she stepped through the hedge of peonies that separates our narrow city house-lots, I knew she had something she really wanted to talk about. As I poured the coffee she asked whether I remembered the Stewart family.

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Now Edith is the kind of woman who gets mixed up in the lives of other people, not just guiltily at Christmas, but with a certain staying power, from one holiday to the next. She acquires “clients” with the kind of “bumbling good will,” as another neighbor calls it, that refuses to admit the adequacy of appropriate social agencies. Among Edith’s good works, I did vaguely remember the Stewart family.

Years ago we’d see Stewart children in Edith’s yard, rolling in piles of maple leaves, eating hamburgers on the back steps; even playing catch in our alley. Someone passing through in a car might holler at them to get the hell out of here, but none of the householders around the block felt threatened by the occasional presence of these children. We knew that they would be here only for a few hours; then Edith would take them back to West Adams Street where they lived.

12 October 1979: 557

As Edith began to talk, I asked her to start way back, for I realized that I had not seen or heard about the Stewarts for a long time. The father, she recalled, was not the greatest. He drank a lot, and in that place where they lived, partially burned out, waiting for the wrecking crew, Edith, when she went to see their mother, might find no milk for all those children, but a couple quarts of Schlitz for him. Sometimes, however, he did try. Once Edith's husband got him a janitor's job at a public school, where he shoveled coal or snow, hauled waste paper and lunch garbage. He would work at it four or five days in a row. When he got paid, he would ride for miles on several buses, to find a currency exchange that looked safer than the ones near home. But then, overcome by thirst or other matters, he would "drink it all up"; by early morning, when he'd find his way back to Adams and Wood, there was never much money left.

Claudia, the mother, worked hard all the time, she really did. The kitchen dripped perpetually with wet baby clothes washed in the bathtub. At one time there were five children under four, or was it four children under three? Perhaps both, in different years, for Mrs. Stewart invariably gave birth to twins: Randy and Andy, Larry and Jerry, Doreen and Flora; others whose names Edith does not remember. Somehow this mother managed always to keep the littlest ones clean, in baskets or in drawers from a Salvation Army dresser. (This was in the '60s, when people still gave useful items "to charity" instead of selling them at garage sales.)

The Stewarts lived in fear. What wasn't real, they imagined, and what was real was bad enough. Neighbors or passersby, drugged or drunk, were always falling against their door, shouting on their stairway, raving at their children. Yet, if you talked about "the projects" as an alternative, Mr. Stewart, who had his own reasons, never wanted to get mixed up with them. What he said was that the Welfare would take away his children; or that if they lived in one of those tall buildings on Division Street, a plane might crash into it, killing all of them.

Those children who were old enough went to St. Jarlath's School, taught to read and to sit up straight by the few hard-working nuns still left there before that place fell to the wreckers. The sisters wanted Jackie, the oldest boy, to wear a clean, ironed shirt and a blue tie. (Claudia wanted it known that Jackie, too, was a twin, but "the other one didn't have much chance, and never left the hospital.") The younger Stewarts, unless Edith came to take them away to a beach, or a park, or her own backyard, never left home. Edith remembers that Claudia was afraid to let anyone play out in front, and that somebody's guard dog patrolled the area in back. It's true that "Toys for Tots" campaigns yielded a once-a-year glut of games, but parts were soon lost or broken. Boxes of old clothes would turn up out of someone's generosity, but also out of season: sunsuits in October, snowsuits in May. Claudia used many of these things to stuff-up holes in floors or windows.

It was on a hot day in August, about ten years ago, that Edith, in her old, green Chevrolet station wagon, went to the West Side to take the big kids to the Oak Street Beach. When she mounted those stairs whose smells she never got used to,

she found all the children except the babies sitting on the floor, lined up against the wall, each one holding a grocery bag of belongings: banged-up pans; packages of black-eyed peas; the clothes they weren't wearing that day.

Why? Because Ulester Stewart had a new fear now: the gang recruiters were after his oldest child, Jackie, demanding allegiance, laying claim to this twelve-year-old. That's why the Stewarts were going home, back to Mississippi: "I don't want my kids killed in Chicago." (Did Mr. Stewart know that great social issues were at stake in Mississippi that summer? Apparently, for him, enfranchisement was not what we call a viable issue. If he wanted to vote, he could vote in Chicago.) And so, my friend drove the Stewarts to the Greyhound Bus Station instead of the Oak Street Beach, and she has not seen them since that day.

What was life like after they reached Mississippi? Edith likes to think of weather not so hostile, a plot of greens and okra, a place less threatening to the children. Claudia's letters through the years, sent from a number of rural-route addresses outside Tupelo, Caledonia and Artesia have not suggested any change-for-the-better in Ulester. These letters have always begun formally and in the same way: "How you have been, done fine I do hope. This leave all well here and done ok." The letters continue in much the same way also. Lists of children's names and ages, modest requests: A blanket. Some curtains. Sweaters for eight-year-old twins. Crayons and gym shoes because "school be starting soon." Three years ago, Claudia wrote that Jackie "gone away somewhere." At first, in cards from Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, "He say he done fine." But during the past year, nothing.

A couple of nights ago Edith accepted a telephone call from the Stewarts in Artesia; four or five Stewarts, all close to the phone were crying into it. Out of the confusion of voices came a call for help. They had received a letter from the Homicide Division of the Police Department in Chicago. Would Edith please talk to the people at the Morgue?

Since that night a few facts have been established and many questions remain unanswered. It appears that nineteen-year-old Jackie Stewart, after a drifting odyssey of unknown episodes, circled back to his native city. He found a job as a dishwasher in an all-night restaurant on Clark Street, not very far from the hospital where he was born; the place, now rubble, that he lived in; and the school, no longer there, where he wore the clean shirt and the blue tie. And he was killed by a bullet apparently aimed at one of the customers. Someone named Bailey is in custody.

"I must be getting old," Edith apologized, "because I heard myself blubbing into the phone about putting a little boy on the bus for Mississippi when he was ten (or was it twelve) years old."

The man at the morgue was patient. "Look, lady," he explained to her, "it happens all the time. This time, though, he goes to Mississippi by air freight. They don't take no bodies by bus." He knows a man who "handles bodies cheap."

I walked to my kitchen door with my neighbor, and watched her push her way again through the peony hedge. English-

teacherly, I wanted her to pull this story together, perhaps with some truism about ghetto realities and middle class illusions of helpfulness. But all she said was, "I keep thinking about Jackie's twin, the one his mother said, 'didn't have much chance.' Jackie didn't have much chance either. He lived in a world that 'handles bodies cheap.'"

Stage

GETTING OUT A NEW AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT

MARSHA NORMAN'S *Getting Out* and James McLure's double bill, *Lone Star* and *Pvt. Wars*, were first presented by the Actors Theatre of Louisville. A few years ago it might have been news to have two Kentucky transplants running at once in New York, but the Actors Theatre has so admirable a reputation for its hospitality to new playwrights, its program of new American plays, that the phenomenon is hardly phenomenal. Marsha Norman is an undeniable credit to the organization—she is currently playwright-in-residence under an NEH grant—but I have strong doubts about James McLure, at least on the basis of these two plays.

First produced in 1977, *Getting Out* went on to play Los Angeles and to be chosen by a committee of the American Theater Critics Association, most of whom knew it only in typescript, for inclusion as the regional play in *The Best Plays of 1977-1978*. It had, then, made a name for itself before it ever got to New York, first in a Phoenix Theatre production, then in the current successful off-Broadway run. A first play seldom chalks up such a record, but Marsha Norman is not the ordinary beginning playwright. Most talented neophytes display either a passionate concern about their subjects or an imaginative flair for theater. *Getting Out* may not be quite the masterpiece that this long lead suggests, but it scores well on both content and form. It is a substantial work and a moving one.

It is the story of a wild Kentucky girl, the product/victim of a difficult family—incestuous father, whoring mother, criminal siblings—who moves from violence to violence in her attempt to impress her own image on an indifferent world. Jailed for having shot a taxi driver (both her parents drive cabs), she is at first the terror of the prison. Presumably tamed by a long stay in solitary, she tries to carve her evil self out of her body with a fork and, once she is physically well, Arlene dwindles into a model prisoner and a parolee. Outside, she must face the fact that the only legitimate job she can get is as a dishwasher—low-paying, exhausting work that will never let her fulfill her dream of regaining her child and creating a protective home so unlike the one in which she grew up. Putting aside new and old temptations to revert to type—the guard whose desire to help her will keep her forever the

favorable prisoner, the pimp who wants to put her back in business again, the mother whose help and whose abuse depends on her not seeing change in her daughter—Arlene elects to make a tiny space in which she can take the first, tentative steps toward asserting herself.

Described in these terms, the play sounds like a case study, which in one sense it is. In presentation, however, it is much more than that. In the dramatic present, we watch Arlene, docile and uncertain after years of doing what she was told to do, finding and turning to positive use some of the spirit which her earlier self (Arlie) used with such horrifying results. At the same time, often in the same acting space, we see Arlie, strutting, tough, unregenerate and, finally, broken. There are parallel scenes—Arlie's last long speech in solitary, Arlene's hysterical outburst which leads to her monologue on how she tried to kill the Arlie in her. Finally, there is the shared speech in which Arlie, caught at an earlier, happier moment of rebellion, begins a reminiscence in which, finally, Arlene speaks lines with her, laughs with her, indicates dramatically that what was best in Arlie—her vitality, her drive—has not been killed, cannot be killed if Arlene is to survive.

When I read the script last year, I was impressed by what it was attempting to do, but there was no way to be certain that the theatrical intricacies on the page could be successfully realized on stage. They are. Jon Jory, Producing Director of the Actors Theatre and director of the original presentation, has staged the New York production with a sure sense of the way the two characters interpenetrate, Arlie's scenes sparking off Arlene's, working alongside without intruding on them. Susan Kingsley, the original Arlene, is an odd, ungainly actress who can, with a shift of position, of perspective, seem suddenly graceful. On the page, Arlene seemed so muted that I wondered if she could make a believable jump to the final shared speech, but all through the play Kingsley conveys—a line here, a gesture there—a sense of Arlie's vitality in Arlene, dampened down, perhaps, but not extinguished. Pamela Reed's Arlie is at her best in the long bragging speeches in which she insists on her unbeatability even as her desperation can be felt in the punching delivery, the too insistent laugh.

Some of the secondary characters—the mother, the pimp—come close to caricature, a weakness that was emphasized when I saw the show by replacement performers who had still not made the roles their own, and the upstairs neighbor, although nicely conceived and well played by Joan Pape, is too obviously a functional instructive voice. Some of the Arlie scenes are little more than exposition, presenting biographical information that is unnecessary since Arlie's speeches and Arlene's confrontations tell us all we need to know about the character. Despite these shortcomings, *Getting Out* is an effective theater piece which has a genuine concern for the traps of both heredity and environment and a wicked way of suggesting the ambiguities of its title. If Marsha Norman's more recent plays, yet to be seen in New York, have as much force and intelligence as *Getting Out*, she is an impressive addition to the list of good young American playwrights.

12 October 1979: 559

Lone Star and *Pvt. Wars* are one-act comedies in which the farcical tone swallows the serious implications. Roy in *Lone Star*, who has come home to find that he is a cuckold and a stranger, and the three men in the veterans hospital in *Pvt. Wars* are presumably designed to say something sad and significant about the ways of being victimized by the Vietnam war. Although there are occasional quiet, almost touching moments, particularly in *Lone Star*, the rattle of bad jokes, the patter of platitudes, the repetitive bits and the revue black-outs crush out the little life the plays might have had. Both Stuart White (*Lone Star*) and Garland Wright (*Pvt. Wars*) have directed the plays as though they were cartoons, and all those large gestures, slack jaws, funny walks, voice indicators underline the playwright's weaknesses. Buried somewhere in this double bill are two small character comedies with social points to make, but McLure, his directors and his actors seem to be shoveling dirt over them when they should be digging them out.

GERALD WEALES

Screen

COPPOLA TOMORROW THE COST OF APOCALYPSE

THERE ARE many places where the failure of *Apocalypse Now* will be felt: at the box office, in conference rooms all over southern California, in Francis Ford Coppola's career. But the one which is the source of all the others, the only place where you and I feel it, is on the screen. The film's story, set in Vietnam, is of a Special Forces captain (Martin Sheen) sent up a jungle river by patrol boat to assassinate a legendary colonel named Kurtz (Marlon Brando). It seems that Kurtz has gone berserk with the band of Montagnard tribesmen he has trained as guerrillas. In Coppola's treatment of this story, which he and John Milius adapted from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, there are sporadic traces of earlier Coppola films. For instance, all the way up the river the captain studies a dossier he's been given on Kurtz. The captain is especially absorbed by a dark, poorly lit photograph of the colonel. Then, after an incident where the captain goes berserk himself, killing a peasant, he sits down with the light behind him and, in the scene's fade-out, turns into a silhouette like the man in the photograph. It's a deft moment characteristic of the director of the *Godfather* films. There we often see the characters backlit, as shadowy figures thrown into relief against the world they inhabit.

Other flashbacks to *The Godfather* don't work as well, though. In that film when the movie mogul wakes up with the severed head of a horse in his bed, it's a ghoulish, stylish touch. In *Apocalypse Now* when Kurtz dumps on the captain's lap the severed head of one of his crewmen from the boat, we don't share the captain's shock or revulsion as we do the movie

mogul's. Kurtz's whole encampment is festooned with severed heads, and it's out of character for the captain, who has not let any of the movie's previous atrocities get to him, to take exception to this one. There is a difference Coppola isn't seeing here between having giddy fantasies about the Mafia and having them about the Vietnam war. Although we should be concerned about organized crime, most of us aren't. We think of gangsters as people who kill off each other and leave us alone. Even real gangsters are a form of entertainment we enjoy in the papers. They are celebrities. If we should happen to know one, we brag to our friends about it. Nobody brags about knowing someone who committed atrocities in Vietnam.

But maybe it's not fair to jump on Coppola for the inappropriateness, the sheer bad taste, of trying to apply his dreams about Mafia dons to this war. When he starts applying more "relevant" thoughts, like those he first had as collaborator on the script for the movie *Patton*, he does worse. He falls in with the generals and politicians who actually ran the Vietnam war, and who also believed that their meditations on World War II somehow qualified them to think about Southeast Asia. *Apocalypse Now* re-enlists Patton himself to fight in Vietnam side by side with Coppola's Mafioso. Since the original Patton believed in reincarnation, he is probably pleased to return here as Lt. Col. Kilgore (Robert Duvall), who leads an air-cav assault on a coastal village. (In real life Patton was reincarnated somewhat less gloriously in Vietnam by his own son, Col. George S.) Kilgore is the spit and image of Patton. He strides along the beach under fire just the way Coppola's Patton strides up and down a North African street which is being strafed by a German plane. Kilgore's horse-cavalry hat is the match for Patton's pearl-handled sidearms. Kilgore is more like the title character in Conrad's *Nostromo* than someone out of *Heart of Darkness*. When Coppola first created the character of Patton, he couldn't help admiring the general's bravado, his dash, his colorful brutality. Now Coppola can't hide his similar feelings for Kilgore.

Kilgore's strike against the village provides *Apocalypse Now* with its one, unintended moment of pathos. Capt. Willard, the officer played by Sheen, is along for the ride; and as he hits the beach during a fire fight, there is a guy there with a movie camera who yells at him, "Run through as if you're fighting!" For a minute we are unsure how we are supposed to read the scene. Is the guy with the camera some whacked-out documentarian shooting footage in the middle of a crossfire, or is Kilgore's strike a fake being staged as part of a movie? Our confusion is increased by the fact that the guy with the camera is Coppola himself. War and movies, Vietnam and *Apocalypse Now*, get all mixed up in our minds.

The scene doesn't work any better than any other in the film. This Hitchcock touch is just more straining after an effect, any effect. It is more of Coppola's thrashing about, pulling out all the stops, trying to get a rise out of us. Yet the heart of this movie's own, particular darkness seems to lie here, in this episode on the beach. We take the scene to be Coppola's admission that the war and the making of his movie got all

mixed up in his mind, too. The comparison is tempting, even irresistible in certain ways. Each is a spectacular fiasco. The only story equal to the one the movie wants to tell is not the story in it, but the story of it. It is the story in the press releases that turned into dispatches from a disaster, the budget that doubled and then doubled again, the heroes who walked out or had heart attacks, the systems with back-up systems (two separate musical scores, two narrations) neither of which worked, the inability to predict not only the weather, but the film's own plot.

In this scenario, Coppola has cast himself as Uncle Sam. He is the fellow who makes a vast fortune in nothing flat, then squanders it all in some jungle half-way around the world. He tries to prove something ridiculous and impossible there. He's certain he has the answer to history. To convince us, he defies nature, ignores common sense, and sacrifices our own good opinion of him. America's ruination in Vietnam becomes Coppola's in *Apocalypse Now*. The seductive thing about this view, particularly for Coppola himself, is that it makes *Apocalypse Now* the one movie version of the war to be trusted. It is the one the war both deserves and demands, the only one that gets beyond the superficialities of *Coming Home* and *The Deer Hunter*.

In Conrad's novel when Kurtz dies, he mutters, "The horror." This is the heart of the darkness, into which none can see. This imageless one-word message is sent back from somewhere in the human spirit which is beyond all restraint. The message tells us nothing except that there are things man is capable of which are unspeakable. In *Apocalypse Now*, Col. Kurtz also says "the horror" when he dies. But he doesn't really mean it, or Coppola doesn't anyway. Just as Americans thought they could win in Vietnam, Coppola thinks he can explain everything now. A partial explanation is put in Kurtz's own mouth as an anecdote. It seems that when he came to Vietnam, a do-gooder with ideals who helped vaccinate little children, the Vietcong chopped off all the children's arms. Seeing that good wouldn't work, Kurtz then switched to evil. From this we are supposed to understand how Kurtz came to be a genocidal maniac, but all the anecdote really explains is why Coppola was so admiring, so nearly jealous, of Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*. Coppola shares Cimino's political analysis that the Vietcong were the cause of all the barbarism in Vietnam and corrupted us American innocents.

Coppola's other partial explanation is a visual one, a sequence of the ritual slaughter of a bull which is interspliced with Willard's assassination of Kurtz. The symbolism here is arbitrary and cliché. Its implication is preposterous that the mass-murderer Kurtz is in truth a sacrifice on the altar of American policy. The one likely to find his head on the chopping block is Coppola himself, for whom a sequence employing a goat might have been more apt. In my last column I was speaking about the Hollywood which Joan Didion describes in *The White Album*, a world of motion-picture executives who are interested in "deals" rather than in movies. There are of course equivalent people in national politics, and since Vietnam I think we have all been feeling that they have

gotten their hooks into us. The Hollywood variety will get their hooks into Coppola now. He has been boasting defensively since *Apocalypse Now* opened that he could sign a contract to direct another picture for \$1 million tomorrow. Maybe. But he would have to give up a lot of control. I doubt, for instance, that he will be able to continue choosing his own projects. I wouldn't be surprised if he finds it easier to produce other people's pictures than direct one of his own in the future. The fact is that the self-indulgence and sophistry and plain error of *Apocalypse Now* have limited Coppola's choices in life. They have compromised and diminished him. They have made him vulnerable to people who finally care little for talent and discourage it. In these ways Coppola will have to go on acting the part of Uncle Sam.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Television

LOU GRANT, SUPERMAN

FRONT PAGE ON THE TUBE

IRASCIBLE OLD Lou Grant, his sleeves rolled up, tie askew, is everyone's picture of what a city editor must be like. Of course, city editors more often than not look very different from that, but it doesn't matter. The fact is that if you have a series about a metropolitan daily there has to be an ulcerous city editor. There should also be an idealistic young reporter from the wrong side of the railroad tracks, a sardonic desk man, an avuncular managing editor, etc. etc.

The great virtue of *Lou Grant* (CBS), which was named best television drama at the 31st Emmy Awards presentation, is that it comes closer to genuine newspaper life than any of its predecessors, although that may be a mixed blessing. Realism, after all, is not necessarily its own reward. There have been very few television programs about newspapers, and that is probably because the opportunities for variety are limited.

The process of gathering and writing news is reasonably straightforward, and varies only as much as stories vary themselves, which, as any reporter will tell you, is infrequent. What, then, to do? You cannot do anything with a columnist or editorial writer—although the attempt would be well worth watching—and a journey down to the composing room could just as easily be any kind of assembly-line format.

I venture to say that *Superman* had the right approach, and Lou Grant comes dangerously close to the same way of doing things. Clark Kent, it will be recalled, was a mild-mannered reporter, and his work was customarily a quick and convenient means of switching the action elsewhere. In *Lou Grant*, the newspaper manages somehow to involve itself in so many different matters, and in so many different directions, that the climactic writing and printing of the story seems somehow gratuitous, rather like a policeman filling out his report.

So, the program is essentially a vehicle for social commen-

tary, set in a journalistic background. In many respects that is a wise decision, for it has been done before in different ways, and frequently with success. Somehow, I am often reminded of *The Defenders*, which was also on CBS, and ran in the early '60s. E.G. Marshall's law practice seemed to prosper extravagantly despite the fact that he paid so little attention to it. Each episode was an independent examination of an independent subject, and the background of legalism was incidental, and introduced only in ways that satisfied the show's dramatic needs.

Lou Grant, I fear, is rather more heavy-handed than that, in the way, I suppose, that reporters are less circumspect than lawyers. At times, however, I wish it weren't so. I am not at all certain that newspapers should turn themselves into large consumer action agencies, or that television programs should be unremitting crusades. After a time, the effect diminishes. Lou Grant makes a heroic effort to be credible, and it is apparent that the producers have spent several afternoons in the real world researching the sets and observing the activities.

But the upshot of that is that it is almost too slick, too self-conscious in its maturity. No one ever says "scoop" and I rather wish they would. *Lou Grant*, in short, lacks a sense of humor, and some of the anarchy and comic genius of the journalistic life is lost. Reporters are not always on the verge of tears over the calamities they witness, any more than editors are so consistently impassive, or publishers other-worldly. Frankly, some of the casual chaos that used to be thrown into the station house on *Kojak* would be in order here; *Lou Grant*, for all its high-mindedness, has a kind of false ring to it that, were it not so antiseptic, it could avoid.

It has also, in a peculiar way, made television history, but of a purely commercial sort. It is, of course, a spin-off of the Mary Tyler Moore Show, a situation comedy, which spun off

in its day three other programs: *Phyllis* a sitcom, *Rhoda*, another sitcom, and another one still using the Ted Baxter character, which lasted, I believe, for one evening.

All of them were mediocre, and the only one that has enjoyed any sort of durable success is *Lou Grant*, a dramatic series created from the rib of a comedy. It is, in its way, a staggering thought, as though the runt of the litter were to grow into a beauty. It is, in TV terms, as though Private Doberman got his own spin-off from the *Phil Silvers Show* and parlayed it into an award-winning dramatic series.

Lou Grant, however, was more obviously destined to succeed. He was, in his earlier incarnation, cast ideally as the morose foil to the WJZ news room; now he serves as a kind of middle-aged, overweight axis around which the vigorous activity revolves. It was also lucky by choosing the right trade; journalism has never enjoyed anything like the professional popularity it has now, and how long it will last I don't know, but television, ever profitable, knows whereof it speaks. And *Lou Grant*, whether intentionally or not, fulfills every undergraduate's dream of investigative romance. Each episode, or so it seems, tackles a fashionable injustice, and the conclusions, like the presumptions, are painfully predictable. Imagine, however, the effect this must have on a tender, yet idealistic, mind. Here, at last, is a means by which the great goals for which we have striven can be achieved, and personal notoriety comes with it, too.

That, after all, comes partly near what General Sarnoff must have had in mind when he would go on about television's potential as an educator. What he also had in mind, to be sure, was money, and *Lou Grant* is a video testament to the proposition that high-mindedness and dividends do not have to be mutually exclusive. Samuel Goldwyn was wrong, and the message is very clear.

PHILIP TERZIAN

ITALY'S WRITERS CONFRONT THE RED BRIGADES

Terrorism in fiction

DESMOND O'GRADY

WHAT IS the effect on fiction writers if events themselves are shaped like a gripping play with strong symbolism? This was the case when former Christian Democrat Prime Minister Aldo Moro was kidnapped on his way to parliament for a vote of confi-

dence in the new government based on a Christian Democrat-Communist agreement he had negotiated. After 55 days imprisonment in which there were frequent messages from Moro himself and his Red Brigades kidnappers, his bullet-ridden body was left equidistant between the Christian Democrat and Communist party headquarters.

It was a media event par excellence. The Red Brigades, who showed sophisticated knowledge of the media, supplied

material to rekindle interest whenever it declined. Journalists could sense when the next Red Brigades communiqué would arrive as if they and the terrorists were working in harness to keep the spectacle alive.

The novelist Albert Arbasino asserted that Italian fiction writers' concerns were pale and private compared with this public drama. He complained that Italian novelists, always as "insignificant as English composers," continued to con-

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Commonweal: 562

centrate on petit-bourgeois, intimate issues without touching the problems which plague Italian society.

In London at the time Moro was taken, Arbasino was impressed by reports of Italians' dramatic reactions. He flew home but found, contrary to the newspapers' rhetoric, widespread indifference, unaltered routines, sarcastic jokes about the affair. He recorded reactions in a book, *In This State (In questo Stato)*, which exposes hypocrisy and the inanities of "commonsense" in what he calls the "country of bla-bla."

Arbasino is probably best-known in Italy for his journalism which is similar to Tom Wolfe's reporting of the social scene but applied instead to the international cultural circuit. A key technique is the use of unexpected comparisons. In *This State* likewise uses provocative comparisons such as that between Moro and Maria Goretti who was canonized after preferring death to loss of her virginity.

In writing what he calls an "anthropological diary of a choral happening," Arbasino claims he was inspired by the Braudel school of historians who pay attention to everyday life's minutiae rather than to the more or less institutional sources of information such as newspapers. He further asserts that *In This State* is in continuity with his novels which are attempts at social history.

Leonardo Sciascia, the Sicilian novelist, also pursued habitual methods in his book on the Moro case. Unlike the novelists Arbasino criticized, Sciascia's fiction concerns social problems such as the Mafia. Another strand in his fiction is reconsideration of historical events in a philosophical 'who-done-it' genre. Shortly before Moro's kidnapping, controversy had flared over a film based on a Sciascia novel, *Todo Modo*, which showed Christian Democrats slaughtering one another during a weekend of spiritual exercises.

Sciascia, who had been elected a Palermo town councillor on a Communist ticket but resigned because of boredom, aroused the wrath of Italian Communists when he refused to stand up and be counted among those defending the State and opposing negotiations after

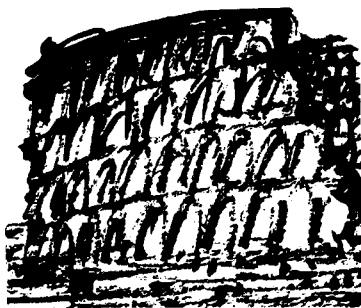
Moro's kidnapping. In preparing his book, *L'Affaire Moro*, he examined solely all the published evidence as if conducting a historical investigation into a crime.

His book eulogizes the imprisoned Moro, whom Sciascia had previously criticized, and accuses the politicians and newspapers for refusing to take seriously the desperate letters Moro wrote from prison. "Moro was killed twice" is Sciascia's accusation: firstly by those who refused to recognize him in his letters, and only secondly by the Brigadists' bullets. The book's epigraph contains the chilling phrase, "A man . . . died at the right moment" which suggests Moro's death was politically convenient. However, Sciascia does not explain how the State could have negotiated with the Red Brigades without losing its remaining credibility nor exactly what could have been offered in exchange for Moro's release.

Incidentally, proceeds from Sciascia's brief book, which inspired countless newspaper discussions, are to fund research into press coverage of the Moro affair.

IN JUNE Alberto Moravia's novel *The Interior Life (La Vita Interiore)*, on which he worked for seven years, was issued with fanfares by its publisher who received 100,000 prepublication orders. Expectations were high for this 408-page imaginary interview between Moravia and a rich Roman high-school student Desideria who tells him how she became a terrorist.

Like Joan of Arc, Desideria hears a Voice but, in her case, it came to her as she was masturbating. The (female) Voice dictates a program of transgression and desecration supposed to make De-



sideria a revolutionary. The program consists in disrupting values such as property (by stealing); religion (by impiety); love (by prostitution); culture (by its rejection); respect for life (by killing).

The characters in this novel, which Moravia has called a "study in sexual semiotics," have a wide range of bizarre sexual experiences. For instance, Desideria's American mother, whose sexual preference is anal intercourse, wants to practice incest with her daughter. Moravia argues that sexual positions correspond to a world-view but, perhaps because the characters are cardboard, their predelections remain sexual quirks rather than having wider significance.

What is Moravia saying about revolutionaries? The interviewer makes intelligent observations on them but the novel's revolutionaries are as squalid as all the other characters. As a reviewer in Rome's Communist daily *Paeae Sera* commented: "The novel tells us more about Moravia than about revolutionaries—but, alas, we knew about him already."

THIS INTERPRETATION is disputed by others such as the literary critic Carlo Bo and the playwright-poet-art critic Giovanni Testori. They claim those who share Moravia's views are merely "dancing on the edge of the abyss," that they have a reductive idea of man without any understanding of evil, and provide slick sociological justification for every misdeed.

The debate between those who complain that Italy is not sufficiently modern and those who argue that "rationalistic modernization" has distorted the spirit indicated the widespread dissatisfaction with Italian society. The 81-year-old poet Eugenio Montale captured the mood in "Springtime Torpor" in his last volume *Notebook for Four Years*:

It's the kidnapping season
We're told not to go out alone
The evening hours are the most
dangerous
But it goes without saying
that daytime is dangerous too
The teachers of judo and karate
are in the seventh heaven

tailors make bullet-proof vests
 Parents go to school
 their children do without it
 Our civilization is at its flood tide
 now that muzzles have broken
 the tongues are free, without
 brakes.

Montale found another motive for skepticism about the contemporary society in the breakdown of standards among academics who concentrate on pop culture:

The interdisciplinary philosopher
 loves to wallow in the filthiest consumer rubbish
 Worst of all, he does it with supreme gratification
 and obviously from the eminence of a chair he despises.
 A shipwreck victim, unable to swim,
 has never been delirious with joy as his ship flounders
 but there's no danger for balloon men—and he knows it.

Many Italian writers recoil from their society even though they give contrasting

explanations of its defects. The recoil is so strong, the social events so impelling that some feel they must comment on events directly.

But this is not true of all Italian writers. And many who recoil from Italian society are simply determined not to recognize its positive features. For instance, a few years ago a book appeared in which one Italian writer after another decried Rome. Now although modern Rome is ugly, the city center is still one of the seven wonders of the world not solely because of the architecture but because it is a lived-in patrician-plebeian mix with palaces and craftsmen's shops side by side. There are still attractive aspects in Italian life and society which some Italian writers refuse to acknowledge.

Content is not the sole criterion for a novel's relevance or worth, as is shown by Ferdinando Camon's work. Camon, a literary critic and poet, has written a novel about terrorists in his native Veneto region which was made into a television serial. But his best novel is the winner of the 1978 Strega prize *Un altare per*

la madre (An Altar for the Mother). In brief episodes, Camon builds a portrait of his mother, a sturdy, fearless, religious peasant whose extreme poverty was cultural as well as material (in addition to her dialect, she knew only a few words of Italian). The novel is also a tribute to peasant culture and a meditation on death.

It is not one of the intimate, still-life interiors Arbasino criticized but neither is it a head-on grappling with social problems. Rather it is a valid novel which conveys attitudes and feelings rather than remain at the level of facts or ideas. This is probably the most valuable function of imaginative writers even though the Moro affair aftermath has shown they can bring valuable insights to immediate comment on contemporary events. But in the rush for immediacy, it tends to be overlooked that novelists can also respond to the Red Brigades by providing a convincing image of man which is not confined to the political sphere. The Red Brigades, in fact, reduce life to purely political terms, a danger that Italian intellectuals constantly run.

Books: HOLLYWOOD HAGIOGRAPHY

IMAGINE what hagiography would be like if the saints were supposed to write their own lives. That's what the autobiographies of movie stars are. Like a saint, a movie star has to have met rigid standards to be canonized, and her life story has to demonstrate her conformity to these universal norms of conduct. This is why the lives of both saints and stars have a certain sameness to them. The role that Jack Kennedy played in Gene Tierney's life, for instance, is the one that Adlai Stevenson played in Lauren Bacall's. Each relationship was doomed from the start, but just goes to show that the star in question had roles to play on a larger stage than Hollywood, and with leading men more important than other mere movie stars. Stars succeed (as saints do) by a paradoxical kind of humility. They despise as unworthy their own best works. It is for this reason that their

BY MYSELF

Lauren Bacall
 Knopf, \$10.95, 377 pp.

LADD

Beverly Linet
 Arbor House, \$10.95, 294 pp.

Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.

autobiographies are inevitably disappointing, at least if you're interested in movies rather than movie stars *per se*.

Stars assume that the last thing anybody wants to read about is the making of movies. Tierney therefore devotes only a few scant pages to the experience of making *Laura* with Otto Preminger, but expends at least a chapter on her ultimately non-existent romance with Kennedy. Bacall, similarly, has little to say about

MOMMIE DEAREST

Christina Crawford
 Morrow, \$9.95, 286 pp.

JOAN CRAWFORD

Bob Thomas
 Bantam, \$2.95, 307 pp.

SELF-PORTRAIT

Gene Tierney
 Wyden Books, \$10.95, 264 pp.

the roles that made her famous in *The Big Sleep* and *To Have and Have Not*. She does remember that in beginning the latter she invented her celebrated, much imitated "Look": "By the end of the third or fourth take, I realized that one way to hold my trembling head still was to keep it down, chin low, almost to my chest, and eyes up at Bogart. It worked and turned out to be the beginning of 'The Look.'" Unfortunately, the balance

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of Bacall's book is devoted to the trembling rather than the "Look."

The same with Tierney. Stardom had almost opposite effects on the two women. Tierney descended into madness and attempted suicide, whereas Bacall remained extraordinarily sane in the face of the sudden success and lingering tragedies. (Well, it is a sanity of a sort, the sort that helps you pass one of those tests in *The Ladies Home Journal*.) But outside of the fact that one attempted suicide and the other didn't, it's hard to tell their lives apart. Bacall's initial stage fright notwithstanding, both women got the jitters over every experience *except* making movies, which each considers almost too incidental a part of her life and her stardom to be worth going into now.

Movie stardom of the sort practiced in these autobiographies was invented by Joan Crawford. In the silent era the roles stars played were romantic, remote, mythological. Some stars aped their screen appearances in real life by walking pet leopards on a string or riding around in cars the size of yachts. But for the most part stardom consisted of trying, like gangsters, to hide from public view the vulgarity and dissipation of one's private life. The ultimate pose of twenties stardom came in the thirties when Garbo declared, "I want to be alone." Only when sound came in did art and life move closer together. Sound made movies more realistic and made the characters in them, though still larger than life, more credible caricatures than before, people whose loves and losses the audience could, by a slight stretch of the imagination, identify with rather than merely dream about. This is where stardom came in with its implication that the star's life both on the screen and off was really the same life, and with its demand that a star's private affairs be as public as her screen performances. This is the modern form of stardom, which Joan Crawford invented.

Crawford wrote her own autobiography in the early seventies; but according to the memoir of her childhood written by Joan's adopted daughter Christina, mommie got a few things wrong. Christina's book is like a mouse-trap play in a revenge tragedy. It rebounds upon its

authoress. More damaging than anything Christina tells us about Joan's alcoholism and violent, sadistic rages is the simple fact that her daughter would feel she could get even, after mommie's death, by writing a pathetic book like this. That Christina herself should want celebrity enough to write such a book in order to get it undermines her own evidence against it. The only way out of this morass of family squabbles, conflicting recriminations and self-serving deceptions is to give up autobiographies altogether and turn to biographies instead. By far the most entertaining and informative of the books under review is Bob Thomas's. In its (relative) neutrality it not only makes us see Crawford's madness clearer than Christina ever could, it also gives at least some attention to Crawford's talents before the camera. She actually ventures onto a sound stage at times; and although Thomas may need a pretext to follow her there—such as the climax to the long-standing Crawford-Bette Davis feud, which came when they at last worked together on *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*—in the process of doing so Thomas at least gives us a glimpse of the actual production of a movie or two.

Yet even Thomas's book is still under the spell of stardom. The book is a kind of devil's advocacy aimed at convincing us not that Crawford wasn't a star, but only that stardom was different from what we imagined it to be. The book simply redefines the requisite qualities for a star as the opposite of what the fan magazines always told us they were. Stardom itself is left unimpaired by this conversion. Thomas is an alumnus of the Hollywood press corps, having written for Associated Press, Los Angeles, for years before he began doing books about stars. It was a natural transition, like going from manufacturing to recycling, making the non-degradable litter from one product, now obsolete, into the raw material for something new. Beneath the modulated tones of the professional biographer we can still hear the old razz-matazz of the reporter who gets all his scoops from press agents. Inside Thomas we sense, lurking still, someone like Beverly Linet.

The book on Alan Ladd by Ms. Linet, who got her start at *Modern Screen* around the time Thomas joined A.P., is the worst-written, most irritating of the biographies under review here. First she ties a string of words to the doorknob. Next she fastens the other end around the loose tooth of our emotions. Then with the last sentence of the paragraph, she tries to kick the door shut. And she repeats this procedure in every, single paragraph. Her approach is relentless, exhausting, excruciating. An entire book to the beat of the 300-word "item" in a pulp magazine. *Ladd* makes only one thing clear: the need to understand the one character in Alan Ladd's life who totally eludes Linet herself, Sue Carol Ladd. An agent who picked up Ladd when he was unknown and devoted herself exclusively to his career, a lover who deftly eased Ladd's first wife out of the picture and married Ladd herself just as he made it big, a wife who invested her husband's earnings and turned them into a fortune, a mother who at first hid even the existence of her stepson from public view and then saw him become head of Twentieth-Century Fox, Sue Carol was clearly the mastermind, and backbone, behind Ladd's stardom.

But in the book she remains an *eminent grise*, a mystery lady eclipsed by the public spectacle of Ladd's decline and fall, the doughty, matronly wife whom Linet congratulates for the dignity with which she used to speak for Ladd on those increasingly frequent occasions when he couldn't even mouth the words himself. Maybe the reason Sue's role in her husband's life is such a blind spot for Linet is that it was too much like Linet's own role. The pictures in these biographies are often as eloquent as the words, and none more than a picture of Ladd at some public function seated between his wife and Linet herself, both of whom happen to be wearing the same outfit. With their equally round, beaming faces and their identical *ensembles*, the two women could be twins. His former agent on one side and his future biographer on the other, Ladd looks as if he were being squashed between the yin and yang of his destiny—as if he were some puny Greek sailor trying to find

safe passage between Scylla and Charybdis in matching furs.

To get anything out of books like these, you have to keep your eye upon the doughnut, brother, and not upon the hole. In the biographies and, even more, in the autobiographies, the person the book is supposed to be about, the central character, is often a void. But surrounding this non-presence, ringing the outer edges of his or her story, are all sorts of other characters into whose lives and personalities we do get a real, if brief, glimpse. The best passages of Bacall's book are her sketches of some of Bogie's friends like the Mark Hellingers, or of Howard Hawks—his anti-Semitism, his stiff-necked disapproval of his stars' adultery, his relationship with his own wife Slim, and the desire he had before he ever met Bacall to create a leading lady who could "play a scene with a masculine approach—insolent. Give as good as she got, no capitulation, no helplessness."

It has always been the great flaw of Hollywood that what it put its mind to, it bungled. Only projects undertaken absent-mindedly and without caring too much, only material developed incidentally, as background for a scene whose emphasis lay elsewhere, turned out really well. Thus have B-movies usually proven more enjoyable, memorable and durable than the blockbuster A's. Thus have character roles and historical settings often been more original and authentic than the lives of the principals. It's not surprising that the same should now prove true of Hollywood's memoirs. I suspect that the real, hardcore audience for the fan magazines and the Hollywood press corps in general was people who didn't care very much about going to movies, or who went only as a sort of ancillary activity to the reading of the magazines and gossip columns. So far as I can see, the biographies and autobiographies of the stars are now being written for the same audience.

materials he has drawn an occasionally stern and moving elegiac poetry.

Levine's best poems are those in which he finely calibrates the brooding presence of past configurations—friends and family, places, historical events—as they compel his imagination here and now. History is no plodding continuity of events but an instantaneous presence, and Levine's language seeks to accommodate this intense pressure. He has always been a poet of rage, but now, in his middle age, much of it is directed toward the weariness of words, "as though the earth/were tired of our talk/and wanted peace, an end/to promises, perhaps/an end to us." He still points his anger at anything that mocks or diminishes life, as in the cruel poetry of the factory in "The Life Ahead." His anger feeds on yearning, his wish to discover and speak from "the place within me/where I am every/man and woman, the trees/floating in the cold haze/of January." This kind of wish may strike some readers as overextended, gross, Romantic, but I think its intensity is redeemed by the purity of its origins in the felt life, in situation, character and event.

But Levine is not always as demanding of himself as he ought to be. There are poems in both books ("Here and Now" and "Milkweed in 7 Years, for example, and "Everything" and "Montjuich" in *Ashes*) which lack the clear intellectual focus of his better poems; when his *rigor* of feeling weakens, the poems sink into an almost pietistic complacency. And when his passion goes undisciplined, the poems' sentiments seem little more than an obligation to contemporary conventions or to his own sense of charming endings. These are the closing lines of "Asking":

Only a boy, still alone,
still solemn, turning
in the darkness
toward manhood, turning
as the years turned
imperceptibly, petal
by petal, closing
for the night,
the question still
unanswered, that question
never to be asked again.

The melancholy tone here strains at

A poet of rage

ASHES

Philip Levine
Atheneum, \$4.95, 66 pp.

7 YEARS FROM SOMEWHERE

Philip Levine
Atheneum, \$4.95, 70 pp.

W.S. Di Piero

THE FREE-VERSE conventions of contemporary poetry allow and perhaps encourage poets to fabricate the look of sincerity and deep feeling much as the rhyming couplet allowed eighteenth century writers to produce poems with the look of dandified intelligence. Unfortunately, and for reasons I don't yet understand, the surfaces of much poetry these days seem as artificial and contrived as those of Augustan poetry. The difference is that our own poetry pretends to the felt life. If emotion occasions clear-minded, stylized expression, poetry should have no need to boast its sincerity, its feelingness. A poem's nature is self-contained and organic; it cannot be something laid on by the poet's hand. When it is laid on,

the poem may still be charming in a way, but mere charm is, or ought to be, a very minor value. The true spell a poem casts issues from the often mysterious integrity of the poem's nature, not from coy, self-conscious delivery.

The simultaneous publication of two new books by Philip Levine, one of which reprints a small-press chapbook published in 1971, persuades us again that if poetry comes as naturally as leaves to a tree—as Keats said it must—it will be singular and exciting and new, however wintry its theme. Levine's high theme is the tragic detachment of self from the world, sometimes an embittered withdrawal, sometimes a brutal cutting off by outside forces, a course redeemed in rare moments by desperate joinings and communings. His subject, as in all his books since *They Feed They Lion* in 1972, is his own history (situated mostly in remembered factories and mills around Detroit and, later, in the red dustblown landscape of the San Joaquin Valley) as it overlays and collides with modern Spanish history. From these ma-

12 October 1979: 567

self-dramatization, the language seems applied to rather than drawn from feeling, and the poetry gets lost in the saying. Because his poetry is for the most part placed in dramatic situations, and because these dramatize the decisions of selfhood (how, for example, we must learn to live with what suffices, and how this may be an unexpected richness), Levine risks a kind of melodrama which has the absolute look of sincerity I mentioned earlier. It must be said, however, that in Levine's case this is a flaw of a high order, commensurate with his high ambition.

There is a sentimentality peculiar to American poets entering mid-life, and it touches Levine as it does Hugo, Stern, Ignatow and others. They tend to exaggerate the drama of endurance and to make cult of experience, of their griefs and hardships, though their tone is generally stoical and composed. The result is a facsimile of self-knowledge, soft answers instead of stern Yeatsian truths. (This may have something to do with the long time these poets had to wait before their voices were widely heard.) Levine is strongest when he disciplines himself away from this temptation. When his poems display little or no sense of self-importance, they become the most im-

portant poems of all, and there are a few of these in each of his two new books. Here, for example, in "Each Time Is Different":

A man
opened his paper and sighed,
somewhere
there was a world, alive and riot-
ing,
somewhere life as we had never
known it went on and on,
but we were here, waiting
because that was all we had
been brought here for, probably all
we were good for, and we were
good.

And here, in "The Water's Chant," a less sententious poem, where Levine, having veered back to a time of death-wish, then beyond that to his birthplace now changed and strange, finally turns away from praying for others to find something else:

I watch my eucalyptus,
the giant in my front yard, bucking
and swaying in the wind and
hear its
tidal roar. In the strange new light
the leaves overflow purple and
gold,
and a fiery dust showers into the
day.

sen: three women (one a religious), three priests (one a famous archbishop), a journalist, an historian, a theologian, a sociologist (maybe two). Except for Sidney Callahan all are "cradle Catholics"; except for the venerable Fulton Sheen, all are "middle aged"—no young people. There are specific points on which the authors disagree. Paul VI is seen as a failure by Greeley: "He will be seen as one who came in the fullness of time and understood nothing of that time." Hitchcock, on the other hand, concludes, "Where the Roman Catholic church would be without the strong balanced sense of Pope Paul VI, I find it impossible to imagine." There is a common array of heroes for most: Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez are often mentioned, but if one were to identify that with "liberalism" one would miss the overwhelming sense of "conservatism" which marks all the essays.

I imagine that being *still* a Catholic testifies to a necessary conserving, a holding on to something with two thousand years of history *already* there. Actually, the problem is that our secular labels of "liberal" and "conservative" quite miss the mark. Most of the writers are "liberal Catholics"—just the kind who read and write for *Commonweal*—but in terms of standard secular liberalism, these essays would indicate that "liberal" and "Catholic" can be uncomfortable companions. Father Greeley in a defense of what he calls "Catholic anthropology" says: "The Catholic view of the nature of human society is 'reactionary' by the standards of liberal humanism which sees the individual as almost totally autonomous, able to guide himself on a universalistic rational path, free from bonds of particularism and tradition." If one had to coin a secular description for the position taken by the authors it would have to be something like "continuumists" since they all believe in the density of history, tradition and particularity which precludes the radical, sweeping, rational revolution for individuals and societies sometimes favored by various secular "liberalisms." "Continuumists" are also not secular conservatives as that term tends to be applied. Alas, most con-

Still Catholic

WHY CATHOLIC

Sidney Callahan, John Deedy, Andrew Greeley, James Hitchcock, Candida Lund, Richard P. McBrien, Abigail McCarthy, Fulton J. Sheen

John J. Delaney, ed.

Doubleday, \$7.95, 186 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

WHY *still* a Catholic? As Sister Candida Lund points out in her essay, we seem to live in the Age of the Adverb. "X is *currently* married to Y. Has he left the priesthood *yet*? My children don't go to church *anymore*." The ominous adverb casts an air of tentativeness on all states and commitments. Not so in the conversion biographies of one's youth,

Karl Stern's *Pillar of Fire* or Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*. Mountains and pillars are images of finality, not flux. Almost all of the essayists in this interesting collection see themselves as "remainders" (hopefully not "remainders") in a tradition now cast aside by old friends, one's children and even some putative representatives of the church itself. It is this sensibility of "those who remain" that gives a common tone to most of the writings. These are not the fiery, dramatic, climactic confessions of yesteryear, these are nostalgia for former excitements: conversion, early days at the Catholic Worker, Vatican II, but a sense that a splendor has somewhere passed.

Editor Delaney gives no clue how this particular collection of authors was cho-

servatives are as radically non-historical as their "liberal" opponents. Where "liberals" would gladly elevate the present off the earth into a utopian future, conservatives would gladly do the same in the direction of some favored past—usually as much a piece of fantasy as any Erewhon. However, there is no need to introduce a dreadful neologism in if one resorts to theological concepts. In that set of understandings, our authors are Catholics because they are such basic *incarnationalists*.

At its root, incarnation in the Christian tradition means that God is embodied, really, truly, definitively. This appears to be a grand common theme in all the authors. God is embodied—in Jesus of Nazareth, in the church, in the Eucharist. Paul Tillich wrote eloquently of the Protestant principle as the directive which prevents humans from identifying ultimate concern with any finite object: church, Biblical writings or holy persons. Tillich's preaching is set radically against the idols; as ultimate, God is not here or there, He is ultimately transcendent. Consistent to his view of Protestantism, Tillich posits that God is beyond God so that not only is the divine not capable of identifying with a holy place or congregation, He is seemingly incapable of even self-identification. This is a caricature of Tillich, and he is not necessarily an orthodox voice for Protestantism, but to the extent that Protestantism involves a prophetic nay-saying, it is opposed to the Catholic sense of these authors. To be sure, the authors are not idolators of the status quo or the given hierarchy. Greeley regards his archbishop as "bizarre"; Sidney Callahan notes that many devoted Catholics of her acquaintance regard episcopal announcements "as though they came from a distant galaxy." (For herself, she avers that she senses the hierarchy are in the same galaxy and even in the same orbit "but not usually on the same planet.") And here I must note that most of what I say about the authors in common does not quite fit Archbishop Sheen. His presentation is elegant and argumentative. As far as I was concerned, he is on *my* planet, and we are even at the same church service—but it is an eloquent *tre*

ore sermon of remembered childhood.)

The Catholic allegiance of the authors lies in the rootedness of this world, the embodiment of something holy in the breadth and depth of history and the close texture of the everyday. Repeatedly in different ways, the authors speak of the importance of family and friends to their sense of being Catholic—the small intimacies of life are important and revelatory. At the same time, they are caught up in the long historical reality of Catholic Christianity. John Deedy claims that the inspiration for his piece came

from the film *Nashville* when Henry Gibson sings (of America) "We must be doing something right to last two hundred years." Deedy thinks two thousand is even more impressive. It is not mere longevity that counts, however. The term that comes up repeatedly is "richness"—as Hitchcock notes, it would probably be the term picked in any word-associated test with "Catholic church." Catholic Christianity seems to the authors to have written off so little of the things of this world: music, painting, the poor—and the rich, politics, old

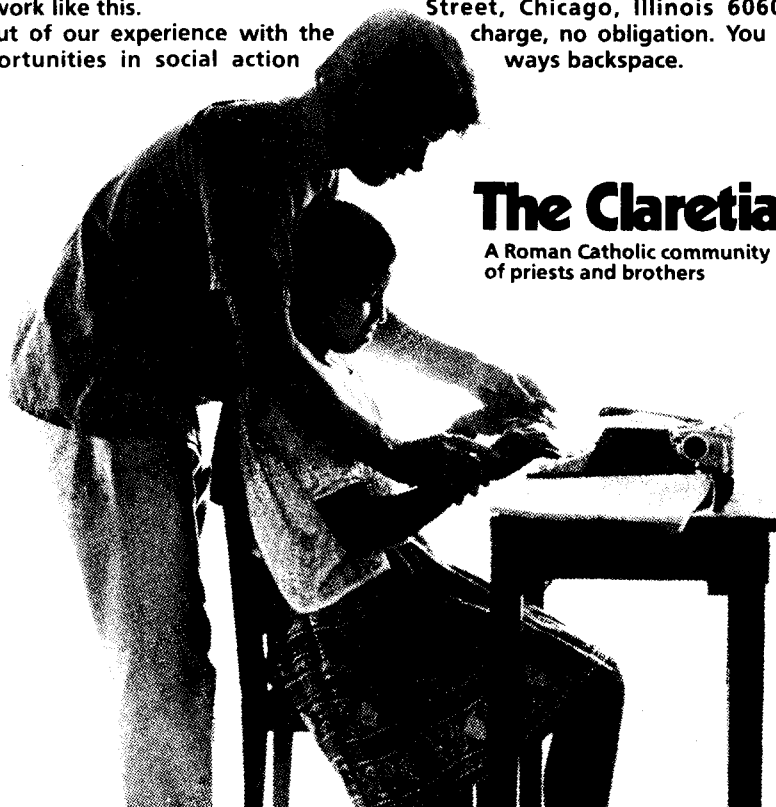
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The Claretians

A Roman Catholic community of priests and brothers

12 October 1979: 569

ethnics and new ethnics, nature and the moral sense.

If this "worldliness" of Catholic Christianity appears tainted to the Reformer, it sounds suspect in another way to the contemporary "liberated" ex-Catholic. McBrien notes a generation of explicit ex-Catholics (Phil Donahue, Mary McCarthy, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) who bemoan "Catholicism's moralistic hammerlock on the psyche, the Jansenism of its sexual ethic, the pervasive fear of hell, the rejection of pleasure, the oppressiveness and insensitivity of its authority figures." How can the pleasanter vision of an accepting, embodied, rich and worldly religion fit with the undoubted stringency of the past (and the present)? There is no easy answer. One is tempted to use Wittgenstein's statement: "This game is played." Somehow moralism and worldliness seem to coexist within Catholicism in something better than a state of mere hypocrisy. But there may be an inner logic. The ease with which some Christian communions have adapted the Gospel to abortion, mercy killing, "self-termination," homosexuality, and so on, must make one wonder whether these ever were serious issues at all. Rome may fret too much on too minute matters, and change seems glacial at times, but to take the world seriously is not to be a glass of fashion. It is fashion—whether in hair styles or life styles—which is anti-worldly since fashion knows only sheen, puff and fluff.

For some reason, it seemed to me that the essays by women were more persuasive than those of the men. The men were perhaps more orderly and rational, but I think Sidney Callahan is closer to the truth when she praises the church for remaining so feminine and motherly, "... a basic reminder of God as Mother, as well as wrapped in transcendence." At the risk of making a romantic sexist *faux pas*, it does seem to me that the culture of women has traditionally been more "of the earth" than that of men. As Shaw says in *Man and Superman*, since man was saved the awful labor of gestation, "he went out and invented civilization without consulting woman." And a fine mess he has made of that!

To the extent that "civilization" creates the great objects which transcend individual life—states, cultures, art and science—it can mislead us into investing these transcendent objects with a kind of sanctity and eternity which they do not quite deserve. Humans do not create eternal objects; men may delude themselves into believing too much in their cultural creations; women traditionally have the fundamental sense of human creation. (Even God asks a favor of woman to participate in history.) The Catholic concern about abortion is not an

aberration of bishops. (Not incidentally, it is surely odd to cast males exclusively as officiators of a Mother Church. That game may not be well played.)

The Catholic church has maintained intimate relations with civilization (not always with benefit of clergy). The authors admire this consorting with culture, but finally (to change the relation) Mother Church appears to regard both great states and small folk as human children to be admired and admonished, desperately worried over, sometimes scolded but never abandoned.

Women's dilemmas

I'VE DONE SO WELL—WHY DO I FEEL SO BAD?

Celia Halas & Roberta Matteson
Macmillan, \$10.95, 304 pp.

Carlo A. Weber

WE SEEM to have fallen heir of late to another publishing innovation. There was a time when book titles were book titles—just that. There was even a rarefied art form developed around inventing them; I can recall once being required to create catchy titles for sample essays, as part of a College English assignment. The long-range fallout from that assignment is that I now have a collection of zippy titles for books I never wrote. But no matter—because now we have sentences instead of titles, sentences like *I'm OK, You're OK, Everytime I Say No, I Feel Guilty*, and other such inelegant constructions. Most recently, I came across a real winner: *Ain't I A Wonder—Ain't You A Wonder?* enough to make an editor gasp. And so, as a consequence of this growing (though short-lived, I hope) trend, and of my rather adverse reaction to it all, I was not very positively disposed by the title of the book I am here being asked to review—and therefore thoroughly unprepared for the quality that lies within it.

And it is a book of superior and unusual quality, both in content and in manners. In a style neither abrasive nor tendentious (a factor in itself unusual), Drs. Halas and Matteson offer a most

lucid exposition of women's historical dilemmas in the areas of equality, self-esteem, affiliation, dependency, guilt, emotionality, power-striving, psychosomatics, perceptions, etc. The sentence-title theme is continued through the book, and the procedure, sustained as it is, makes for very sharp and telling illustrations. For they are sentences that evoke immediate recognition, and capsule experiences of scope and communality. Phrases like "I can be emotional, but I musn't upset anyone," "I'm responsible for everything and powerless to effect change," "Getting sick isn't so bad; there's a lot of strength in it," "I don't see it the way you do, so I must be wrong," "If I'm good, I'll be liked" bring the immediate response: "That's exactly how I feel."

It is not hard to elaborate on the dynamics involved in phrases of this sort; and the authors do that in each case simply and unobtrusively. The style is telling and the authors do not get in the way of the message, drawn directly, without tampering, from the records of their own many cases. They use a myriad of rather explicit and brief case vignettes to hammer home the point that women have been coerced into indirect and often devious ways of expressing anger, power-striving, fear, sexuality and, in general, their point of view, all of which they were not able to express directly. Now that in itself is surely not an unfamiliar theme, but it is expressed here with such clarity and economy of word

and interpretation that even phrases that might in other contexts be considered clichés come off with freshness and punch. There is no doubt, as the fly-leaf (generally a source of dubious reliability) informs us, that “millions of women will . . . recognize themselves in the pages of this helpful book.”

But perhaps even more notable than the content of the book itself, as accurate and significant as that might be, is the authors’ approach—sensitive and sophisticated. That is especially noteworthy, since the subject matter has lent itself in other works to a complex of abrasive, defensive and extra-punitive postures. One simply does not find here such projections and overstatements. The authors are always optimistic and straightforward, almost as unbiased reporters of the events that take place in their offices. They astutely avoid the temptation of making unfortunate comparisons or analogies by referring to similar situations involving men. No blame is placed, even when it is manifestly deserved, and the responsibility for constructive change is placed unequivocally upon the women with whom the authors are consulting. In this sense they exhibit a good deal more wisdom than did the male editor of *Commonweal* in submitting this book to a male reviewer, or indeed did the male reviewer in accepting the book for review.

To be sure, the book is written on the premise that our society is still male-oriented. And so it is, though now in more advanced and pernicious forms. Assuming that we are now past the issue of “equal pay for equal work” (which we are not really), I have noted in my own work with women executives and their experiences of stress, that male dominance can be insidiously increased at the very point when the woman has “arrived” at that executive level previously regarded as an impenetrable male enclave. The notorious absence of a support system for women executives, analogous to that carefully evolved for men and just as carefully nourished and sustained over many years, is a case in point.

A man promoted to executive status is immediately and universally perceived to be a success; he enjoys the company of

other male executives in a regular and exclusive way, and does business with them in casual corners of the marketplace; he enjoys the unquestioned right to take Wednesday afternoon off for sailing or golf; and above all, he enjoys the gentle support of the always reliable female secretary, who nurtures him, praises him, covers for him, protects him, pretends to adore him, and, under appropriate circumstances, lunches with him. The woman executive, on the other hand, enjoys none of these supports; and the stress she experiences as a function of the responsibility of her position is thus compounded by that of being very much alone in her role.

And yet, despite these common experiences, the authors are not taking aim at anyone. A recent advertisement claimed that the book provided “heavy artillery . . . in the arsenal of Women’s Lib,” a remark which seems sadly off the mark. At the risk of some projection of my own, I don’t believe the authors perceived their work as “heavy artillery” in anyone’s arsenal, apart from that collection of strategies which women must have to resolve their paradoxes.

The book is also scholarly, in the sense that every thesis is buttressed by an appropriate selection of vignettes from the

authors’ clinical experience, all narrated clearly and pleasantly. I had, however, some sense of fragmentation as individual client episodes appeared and sometimes re-appeared to exemplify different issues. The very brevity of the vignettes did some offense to my compulsive need as a therapist to follow an unfolding case in toto. Rather, I had the experience of peering at people through peepholes, seeing only parts of them, when I very much wanted a more integrated view. I also got the impression, perhaps incorrectly, that the client population was greatly, if not entirely, restricted to middle-class, mostly Caucasian women. But one can scarcely fault authors for not being more comprehensive than their experience, especially when they make no claim to generalize beyond it.

If there is a problem with the book, it may be that the leading question “why do I feel so bad when I have done so well” is not really answered—nor perhaps can it be, apart from the individual case. One reason is that the authors carefully avoid the trap of talking about the oppressive male, and, as competent therapists, restrict themselves to placing responsibility back upon their clients to bring about some change in

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their attitudes, perceptions, life styles. For they are the only ones who *can* change, in the therapeutic setting. But that then leads to the further question (and hopefully another book from the same authors, or another team as competent as they), "Since I now feel fine about myself, why doesn't the male in my life feel fine about me?", a title which may take the prize for longest sentence title, if for nothing else. For some women, this may not be an issue any

longer, but I suspect that it is for many, and for the women in the authors' client population, it would seem to be. In any event, it is clearly time for a book on the difficulties males now experience with women who have successfully accomplished the goals Drs. Halas and Matteson encourage them to achieve. Any offers? Any male author daring to write such an equal however, would be gravely amiss were he not to read this book first.

Experts in experience

RISE GONNA RISE:

A PORTRAIT OF SOUTHERN TEXTILE WORKERS

Mimi Conway

Doubleday/Anchor, \$10.95, 240 pp.

Ed McConville

"I WAS fourteen when I started working in the mills, and thirty-six years laboring in the mills makes me an expert on labor relations," 62-year-old Lucy Taylor told J.P. Stevens and Co. President James D. Finley at the company's 1977 stockholders meeting in New York. The Roanoke Rapids woman later described herself and other brown lung victims about to testify at an Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) hearing in Washington on establishing safe cotton dust levels in the textile industry. "We are not technical experts, but we are experts in experience, and in telling the truth about our lives."

Mimi Conway takes Lucy Taylor at

"She leaned toward me, half impish, half conspiratorial, and said, 'My husband, Earl, is sitting back there off the kitchen. He worked up there for Stephen-son till he lost his leg in an accident in '68. He could tell you a lot if he would. But he said he don't want to talk to no woman about no union. He doesn't even like having you in the house. But, c'mon.'" She winked at me. "We'll go talk to him."—(Woman described and quoted was Virginia Davis)

—Rise Gonna Rise

her word in *Rise Gonna Rise*, her look at the lives of J.P. Stevens workers in Roanoke Rapids, site of the labor movement's historic breakthrough in Southern textiles in 1974. The author does not rely on professional or academic expertise, nor does she set herself up as an expert on her subject. She relies almost entirely on the words of the mill workers she writes about. And the result is a compelling one, for they have much to say.

Lucy Taylor contracted byssinosis, or brown lung disease, by breathing in cotton dust in the mills. Her husband, F.K., describes his wife's illness in non-clinical terms.

For the last ten or fifteen years, she's coughed every night. Half the time she gets me up with her coughing. Then when she gets quiet, I start to worry that she's dead. I've gone to bed a thousand times like that, half the night sleepless because of her coughing, and the other half worried that she's died . . . we've finally had to sleep in separate beds so I could sleep at all. I'm thinking of suing J.P. Stevens for "alienation of affection." There are hundreds of people all over town the same way.

Workers at Stevens are often unable to leave their machines during the course of a shift. Ernestine Brooks describes her working conditions in the No. 3 spinning room at the Rosemary Mill in Roanoke Rapids.

My bossman told me, "If you don't get your 'chines right, then you don't eat. You'll just have to

swallow fast." They wouldn't even let you go to the bathroom. When I asked my bossman if I could go, he said I couldn't leave my machines. I asked him what I was supposed to do, and he said he didn't know. . . ." Unless you're smart enough to keep all these machines going, you can't go to the bathroom." I got almost crazy in that job.

One overseer sent his wife home without pay for going to the bathroom on company time, to show he was above favoritism.

Workers tell the author of their fear of being fired for union activity, their fear of being torn from their roots and forced to leave home in search of work if they are blacklisted in their own community. We hear black and white textile workers warily coming to accept one another. Some mill workers talk about their once unthinkable decision to join the Amal-

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gamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) or the Carolina Brown Lung Association (CBLA). Others still believe the union "a tool of the Devil bringing on the mark of the Beast," in the words of one member of the J.P. Stevens Employees Educational Committee.

Conway has chosen a wise stylistic strategy for a book on Southern textile workers. Too many sympathetic social critics have caricatured mill workers as working-class heroes with a Southern accent. These embarrassingly pietistic portraits are usually the product of over-analysis and ideological wishful thinking, the almost irresistible human impulse to perceive a people in perfect accord with one's own political predispositions, in this case Marxism and, in recent years, a resurrected Southern populism. The author almost never analyzes. She rarely describes, though her few descriptive passages call to mind Carson McCullers at her best. She quotes constantly. And, when allowed to speak for themselves, Southern textile workers emerge as admirable and likable, but complete with their cussedness and the other qualities which render them imperfect, and therefore human.

Several of the textile workers she talked with say their lives were better under the paternalism of the old Southern mill village, which many observers have

seen as an almost unmitigated evil, than they are today under the impersonal absentee ownership of large Northern corporations like Stevens. The old, local mill management in Roanoke Rapids "didn't do you like this," recalled Louis Harrell, who has since died of brown lung. "Back then if a man got sick, they didn't fix it so he couldn't eat. He may have had to take a reduction in pay, but he got a job he could handle. Now, boy, if you can't handle your job, it's 'boom,' "

The conglomerates taking over the textile industry often exhibit a complete disregard for regional mores. One staunchly anti-union worker told Conway with more than a trace of bitterness of the time "Stephenson got [a weaver] out of church one Sunday to go in to the mill. That man told them if they had to haul a man out of church, they could fire him. And they did." (The fact most mill workers in Roanoke Rapids call their own employer "Stephenson," a more common name than "Stevens" in eastern North Carolina, is, the author points out, a reminder that J.P. Stevens and Co. is still considered an outsider in the town after a presence of 24 years.)

The striking notion that the managements of the South's proudest and primary industry are outsiders, out of touch with textile workers and their communities, could have profound implications for the future of trade unionism in America's last major unorganized manufacturing industry. No longer can mill management as believably brand union organizers "outside agitators." And perhaps the regional sentiment which has served the cause of reaction so often in the past can be made to serve the cause of social justice now.

Testifying at congressional hearings held in Roanoke Rapids two years ago, the Rev. W.W. Finlator, an unlikely Baptist minister from Raleigh, N.C., who advocates unionization, said, "Those of us who have lived always in the South have come to believe that our Southern land, which we love so much, has in fact become a colonial possession of the other parts of the country. People have come in and exploited our people. This must come to an end."

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RONALD CHRIST *is Editor of Review, published by the Center for Inter-American Relations.*

12 October 1979: 573

Jesus, East and West

A LIFE OF CHRIST

Shusaku Endo

Paulist, \$9.95, 179 pp.

MAN OF NAZARETH

Anthony Burgess

McGraw-Hill, \$10.95, 357 pp.

Paul Wilkes

HERE ARE TWO more biographies of the most written-about man in history. And, by two veteran writers who treat him in two such vastly different ways that one wonders if, indeed, it is the same person under consideration.

From the East comes Shusaku Endo and his Jesus is approached carefully, quietly, as if his story is to be told accompanied by a simple tune on a hand-carved flute. And from the West, Anthony Burgess who obviously feels facts are springboards and the only way to tell the story of Jesus is to marshal a supporting cast of grotesqueries, set the whole troupe on a mammoth stage and have a 100-piece philharmonic in the pit.

Faced with these two books and being old-school Catholic by both temperament and education I, of course, could not begin with such flippancy.

So, I started with Endo and found the pace slow, the history interesting, the tone reverent, as would befit a man who is trying to tell his people, the Japanese, of a man they know as little about as we do of Buddha. I quickly flagged. Good intentions, my friend, but . . .

I switched to Burgess and was immediately caught up in the fancy footwork of a much more talented writer who could show me a Herod suffering from gout, a Jesus who married only to have his wife die and a Mary who was confused all the way through her pregnancy as to what had exactly happened and who this person was growing inside her.

But then, slowly it dawned on me with the creeping awareness of a little boy who thought he could make a whole meal of a ice cream sundae gopped high with thick, creamy butterscotch. The sweet

stuff of Burgess went down easily, too easily. And I quickly had my fill.

Once back with Endo I felt I was in the company of a good, old friend, a baker of substantial whole wheat loaves. Perhaps, as we sometimes reject those plodding, well-intentioned friends of ours, I'd not waited long enough for him. I'd wanted to be swept away and all my friend Endo wanted to do was take me along for a walk.

Burgess's book is the stepchild of his *Jesus of Nazareth* television series, which, to me, had the same glaring superficialities and turned into a biblical soap opera. In his attempt to make Jesus the cinematic centerpiece, he lost the meaning of the man's life. Thank goodness Jesus, in his real life, opened out of town.

Not that Jesus has to be dealt with soooo solemnly, nor for that fact, accurately. But Burgess seems like the kind of fellow who, if he were trying to illustrate the "new freedom" of women religious would plaster one on the centerfold of *Playboy*. As if by making something common and ordinary, he can make it strikingly apparent.

Endo's quiet, unassuming book—which sold 300,000 copies in Japan—is not going to sell anything like that in America, I wouldn't think. But for sure it will still be around and cherished when Burgess publishes his next dozen excesses—which shouldn't take him too very long.

In brief

UNDESIRABLE ALIEN, by Régis Debray, translated by Rosemary Sheed, Viking, \$9.95, 235 pp.

Régis Debray's earlier writings are so much a part of the reality and mythology of making the revolution in Latin America that he cannot resist referring to them in this his first novel. "Hey, do you know what they're doing up there in the Sierra?" asks one of his characters, "They're making a close study of Re-

volution in the Revolution?!" A little later the same character adds, "Christ, I wish these tinpot philosophers would leave us in peace. Why can't they stay at home, instead of coming here to evangelize the Indians?"

A comparable attempt at forcing a perspective on experience through fiction is what motivates Debray's hero, Frank, who has come from Switzerland to an unnamed country bordering the Caribbean to join the revolutionary movement. While there, he encounters the curiously reversed and dispersed bureaucracy of the insurgents, takes part in some deadly shoot-outs and falls in love with a committed revolutionary, Celia. Frank writes his story, he says—much as Debray himself might have said—"To reconstruct this puzzle in the third person, to put together the scattered fragments of our so uncommon life, to try to get the pieces into a straight line: introduction, development, crisis, dénouement." Thus, in addition to the narrative of undercover struggle, we read *Undesirable Alien*, inevitably, as Debray's attempt to order his own experience. Such reading has its reward if we assume the authority of the narrative; but what really comes across in the book—more than the chi-chi format of a story self-consciously aware of itself as story, more, even, than the gossipy interest of trying to figure out whether Frank's adventures were really Debray's—are the straightforward passages flatly and expertly stating the world of the novel; "The underground has its own aristocracy—an aristocracy of absence—and the highest title of all is conferred by death, by murder or execution."

Despite the book's jacket, this is not Debray's "first fiction." He published two stories, *The Border* and *Young Man in the Know*, and their translation in 1968 by Helen R. Lane is far superior to that of the novel by Rosemary Sheed. Eleven years later, Debray is still a better essayist and polemicist than storyteller. Yet readers will look past Frank's characterizing clichés ("The fact of the matter is that in our day history has become too serious a matter to be left to the historians.") As they are caught up in the

excitement of an authentic thriller dramatizing a revolutionary question in the light of personal experience: "Can we, in this fragmented age, hope to succeed in what the Jesuits attempted in vain in the days of Loyola: being intelligent soldiers? In their world there was order and clarity, one pope and one king, yet they came to grief none the less."

RONALD CHRIST

Correspondence

(Continued from page 546)

guide the *public* realm. My fear is that John Paul II may complete his American tour without our ever being reminded, for example, that the Catholic church has a very explicit teaching about mass destruction weapons (that their use is a crime against God) and about private property (that our right to it is conditioned by wider public needs). In other words, there is a danger that in seeking to avoid one ideology, the Pope may inadvertently perpetuate another one by suggesting that what religion is about is the private, churchly sphere.

Curiously, Thibaud believes that "the debate itself" and not some foreordained answers is what holds modern society together. But he also seems strangely reticent to allow that debate to make explicit reference to religious groundings lest it produce some "politico-religious amalgam" and then disintegrate into factionalism. Surely the danger is there. The opposite one, however, is that we will continue to do what we Americans have learned to do so well recently, to debate our political options solely on the basis of the personalities of the candidates and on what is alleged to be a merely pragmatic basis. What I believe we need is to learn how to argue these issues with some explicit reference to their theological overtones, something we have avoided like poison for decades now, sensing that such a debate might get us back to hanging Quakers and burning convents again.

So, as Thibaud says, the Pope's task does seem to be impossible. Imagine the churning that will take place in the graves of those Puritan divines who lie beneath the sod of the nearby King's Chapel bu-

rial ground when the very Pope of Rome says a Mass on Boston Common! No wonder there will be a temptation to downplay any division, to concentrate on the private realm, to assure everyone—by ignoring the subjects—that Christianity really has little or nothing to say about the MX missile system, the conspiracies of the oil companies or cruel abandonment of New England factory towns by corporations rushing toward the less unionized Sun Belt.

Yet somehow, after they have recovered from their surprise, I believe those Puritan forebears—given their present improved vantage point—might understand that in the Pope they have a potential ally at least in their belief that Christianity concerns something more than the communion of the individual soul with God. It has to do with building the godly commonwealth, with striving to make human justice integral to the structural, not only the personal, ways we interact with each other. To this end I hope the Pope will risk a little unpopularity by being a little controversial. I hope he will not only visit us but teach us, that he will remind us of the full scope and grandeur of the vision of which he has become, in our time, the chief representative in the whole world.

HARVEY COX

Thomas Professor of Divinity
Harvard University

Silence in church

Lake Orion, Mich.

To the Editors: The article by J. Patrick Dobel on liturgical silence [Aug. 3], deserves reading by interested liturgists. It is a most objective and most sensitive treatment of liturgy and liturgical practices. The traditionally-oriented and the relevantly-oriented liturgists will find in this article food for thought. And indeed motivation to re-evaluate their present attitudes or accepted practices. Give us more Dr. Dobel, please.

(MSGR.) HUGH DOLAN

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Mercy Convoys

Because of the threat of "mass starvation" there, Catholic Relief Services seeks to expand its aid in food and medicines to Cambodians at the Thailand border. Nine mercy convoys have reached the stricken people. Additional funds are urgently needed by CRS for its Southeast Asian Refugee Fund to "help save as many lives as we can." Checks should be sent to Catholic Relief Services, 1011 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Health Center

Next month, at the end of their rainy season, Ursulines hope to build a health center at Banari, deep in the interior of India. They provide the only medical help for miles around for aborigines who "have not even 2 meals a day the whole year round." Additional funds are needed, and checks for the Ranchi Ursuline Society a/c No. 1122 should be sent to Sister Paula De Block, Ursuline Provincialate, Kanke Road 23/303, Ranchi 834008, India (Air-mail: 31¢).

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